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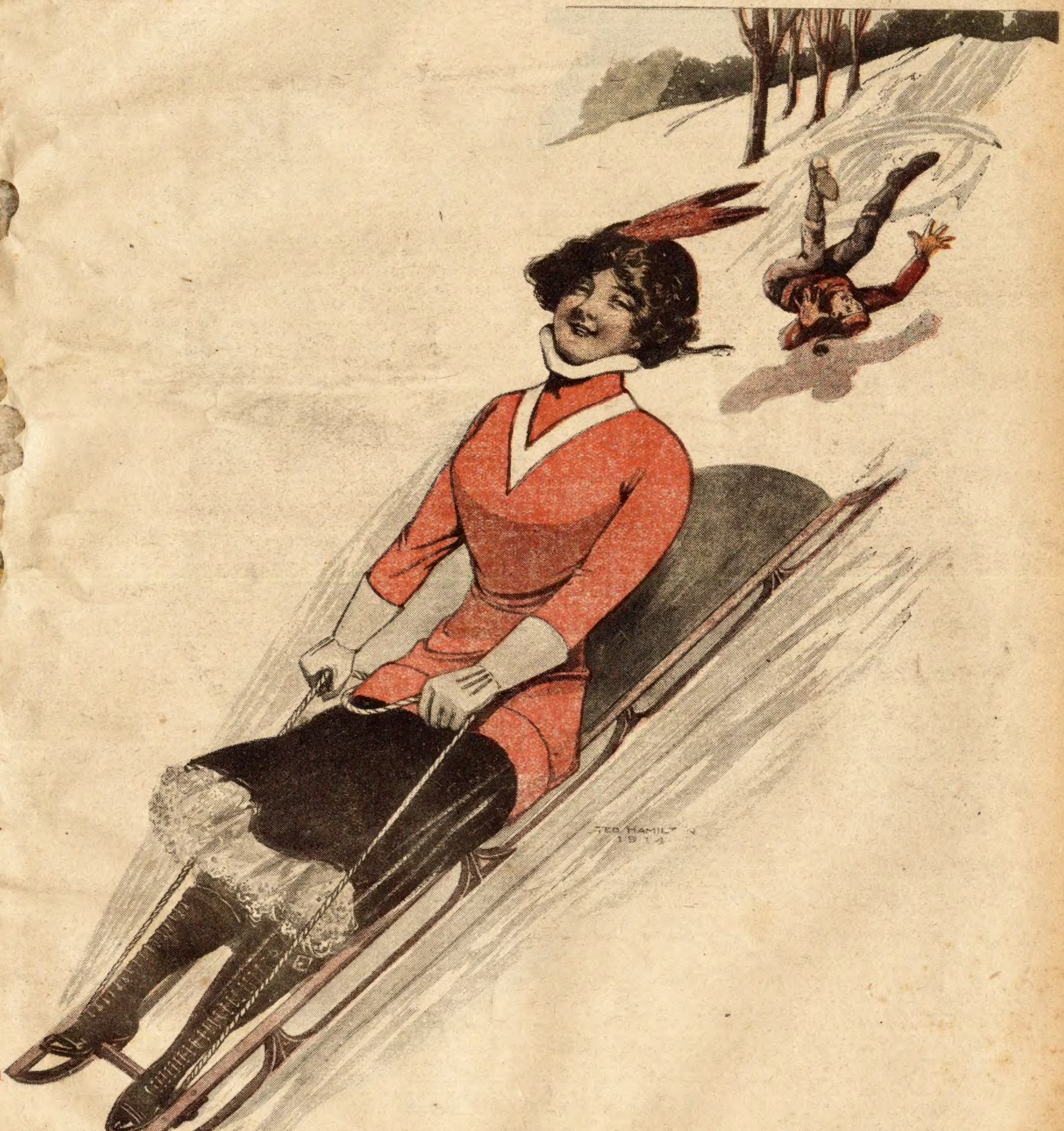
TED HAMILTON
1914

"The Boy She Left Behind Her."

# THE CLAM DIGGER

## Or, A CEDAR RIVER MYSTERY – By WILLIS E. LINK

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### CHAPTER I.

### OVER THE DAM.

THE strange story began one morning in June, when the bustling city of Waterloo, Iowa, was beginning to awaken to a day of business activity. The town spreads out from both banks of the Cedar River, where three bridges span the stream. Drays, automobiles, street cars, and pedestrians were already numerous on the Fourth street bridge, the one farthest up the stream, and many glances of awe were directed to the flood of water rushing over the dam, a few rods above the bride. A few days before heavy rains had fallen over the greater part of Iowa, and rivers were at high-water mark. With the Cedar River the crest of the flood had now reached Waterloo.

One young man, cheaply and coarsely dressed, did not seem to share in the prevailing spirit of being on the move. He leaned against the parapet of the bridge, and occasionally glanced up the river with a growing air of impatience. He was big and strong, and his large round face would be pronounced sensual and selfish by a reader of character, with little indication of will power to combat evil tendencies.

In a vast sheet the water swept smoothly over the dam and then made a short downward curve. The mass became engulfed in a maze of waves and commotion below and a sullen roar reverberated in the air. This spectacle did not attract the watchful young man.

"I'm getting tired waiting for the show to begin," he muttered under his breath. "I wonder if the boat is stuck somewhere in the brush." He turned to glance up the river. At once his apathy disappeared as he gazed intently up the stream.

"Hello, Sam," spoke some one at his elbow. "Too high water to dig for clams just now, but what brings you down into the city so early?" The speaker clapped the young man upon the shoulder.

"Had some business, Jack, but the lazy city folks are not yet in their offices," replied Sam, as he turned and extended his hand. "What do you suppose that is?" and he pointed up the river to where, half a mile away, an object floated upon the water.

"Too far away to tell yet—maybe it is a boat," answered Jack.

"Let's watch and see," and Sam fixed his gaze upon the object which now was rapidly approaching.

For several minutes the two watched, passing a few desultory remarks in the meantime.

"It's a boat sure enough," Sam finally announced, and if Jack had been a close observer he would have noticed an air of relief in the speaker's voice and action as he straightened upon his feet.

"Sure," Jack acquiesced.

Several pedestrians had stopped and were watching the approaching boat with a careless curiosity. The number rapidly increased until half the parapet of the bridge was lined with spectators. It was no great show to see a boat go over the dam, but a crowd easily gathers in a town. A trifle was attracting the attention of a hundred people, and no one, save Sam, realized the terrible sensation the next few minutes held in store.

On came the boat with accelerated speed toward the dam. Just before reaching this point, something was seen inside.

"I believe some one is in there!" a man shouted, and suddenly the chatter of the crowd ceased.

The next moment the boat reached the curve of water at the dam, and the prow dipped down. What the spectators saw caused them to turn pale or catch their breath with horror and astonishment. In the bottom of the boat lay a girl, or young woman, dressed in white, a hat upon her head and a veil over her face. Lying as if asleep, except that her face was deathly white, the occupant of the unguided craft went with it beneath the boiling waters.

For a few seconds the crowd seemed paralyzed, then there was a rush for the other side of the bridge. It seemed many minutes, but in reality it was less than one, when the boat came to the surface below the structure upon which they were standing. The little vessel was bottom side up, and nothing could be seen of its occupant.

A policeman was in the crowd, and he soon reached a telephone to communicate with headquarters. Men and boys struck down the river, and automobiles were soon flying in the same direction. The upturned boat passed under the two other bridges, then through some rough water that marked the place where a dam had formerly held its own but now was gone to ruin and decay. Below this dam the water was comparatively smooth. An automobile had brought up a rowboat, and two venturesome men paddled out into the stream. The captured boat was towed to the shore and hauled upon the bank. There was nothing to give the faintest clew as to its last mysterious occupant, only a name, "Nathan Talbot," painted near the bow. This was evidently the name of the owner, and soon officers were hurrying in an automobile up the river to a cabin that Talbot called his home.

The investigation of the boat was about completed when a boy excitedly called attention to some marking almost obliterated by the washing of the water. Looking closely, "Good-by, Pearl Ames," was deciphered. Just then a hat with a veil attached was brought to shore, for the adventurous men had instantly recognized the hat as precisely similar to one that Pearl Ames had worn. Only one city officer was left, but he mentally arrived at a conclusion. That morning the department had been notified of the disappearance of Miss Ames some time during the preceding evening. Her distracted father, a leading dry goods merchant, could give no information, except that she had left a friend's home about nine o'clock. This house was about four blocks from the Ames residence, in the most aristocratic part of the city. All the way to her home the streets were well lighted, but at one place big trees shadowed the walk. Her home life was happy, and there was no reason why she should run away. The officer hurried back to the police station.

A telephone call brought Mr. and Mrs. Ames to headquarters. Mrs. Ames instantly recognized her daughter's hat and veil. There were stitches and peculiarities that made the identification certain. The poor mother broke down and wept hysterically. The father, stunned as he was, tried to utter words of hope and comfort. At this moment the officers returned from the Talbot cabin and exhibited a light evening wrap they had found at the boat landing near by. Mrs. Ames fainted as she beheld this, for she knew Pearl had worn the garment the evening before.

Why was the girl so far up the river? The Talbot shack was all of three miles away. Why should she be at this particular place? If she was there, as circumstances seemed to show, what happened? Where was Nathan Talbot? Perhaps he held the key to the mystery. Officers were sent out to bring him in.

Meantime Mr. Ames was questioned. He answered frankly and seemed to have nothing to conceal. Yes, Nathan had been his daughter's lover for nearly two years. Of course, the parents would have preferred that their daughter should have bestowed her favors upon some one else than a clam digger. Nathan had never asked for the daughter's hand, so had never been refused. It was hard to tell how it would have been had this request been made. After careful inquiry, nothing detrimental to the young man's character and habits had been discovered. He had graduated from a college and was very industrious. Why he chose clam digging for an occupation was somewhat of a mystery. Mr. Ames was confident there were no black shadows to be concealed in Nathan's past life.

While some of the situation was gone over again in an effort to find a possible solution to the perplexing problem the police department had up for a solution, Nathan Talbot unattended walked into the office. Horror and despair were so plainly written upon his face that all could read.

### CHAPTER II.

### TWO LOST PEARLS.

ON THE edge of the business section in the "West Side" in Waterloo, a square is laid out in a pretty park. The sloping hill, beautiful trees, and green sward are Nature's work; a number of accessories to this man has added, and the combination results in making an attractive location in the summer time, especially. An hour before the sensation at the Cedar River dam, Nathan Talbot had sauntered into the park and thrown himself listlessly upon a rustic bench. The sun was just rising, and no one else yet sought the inviting surroundings. Nathan did not care for the beauties so plainly evident on every side, but he wanted to be alone where he could think. After a sleepless night, he had arisen at the first streaks of dawn and wandered up an down the streets, finally entering the park. He was conscious that his thinking in the line he followed was simply useless, but still he stubbornly went over and over the same ground. On the rustic bench he started in afresh, even going back farther than his thoughts had traveled that balmy June morning.

Into his mind came the recollection of a pleasant boyhood home, with loving parents who pushed him along and made sacrifices until his college course was completed. His only sister had married and settled down to her new life in this growing city on the Cedar. Soon after this, within a few weeks of each other, both parents bade an eternal farewell to son and daughter. Tears came into Nathan's eyes and he hurried his thoughts along. He had made his home with his sister and her husband, and entered a store to learn the mercantile business, for when affairs were settled after the death of his father, nothing was left for the two children. For two years he had worked faithfully; then he had met Pearl.

It was in this very park, down there by the miniature stream, and he would never forget the time and place. She had completed her course at a young ladies' seminary, and two or three evenings after returning home she came to the park with some girl friends to enjoy the band concert which was scheduled for that particular time. A young lady with Pearl was acquainted with Nathan. When he accidentally met the group, she had introduced him to all her friends. He tried to be affable to all the girls, but it was really hard, for he wanted to talk to Pearl alone. He wanted to gaze at her so much more than he dared to. Probably there were other girls in the park just as attractive in appearance and manner, but he doubted this. It had been settled in his mind for many moons that it was a case of love at first sight.

Well, he had afterward sought her society and had not been repulsed. He and Pearl made a handsome couple, so he had been told. He felt that as for himself he would pass muster with the average young fellow when it came to looks. He was tall and well-proportioned, quick and active in his movements, and he flattered himself that in dress and manners he was a gentleman. His mirror showed an intellectual cast of countenance, brown hair, blue eyes, and no marks of dissipation, for his habits were good, and became him as a member of one of the city churches. So much for himself.

As to Pearl, there was no doubt as to her superior qualities. She was of medium height, and no girl in the city was more correct as to her proportions. Dark hair, the darkest of brown eyes, and a complexion of "peaches and cream" surely made up a perfect combination. She was full of life and always ready to talk, which was satisfying to him, for he was sometimes bothered in an effort to keep his tongue in action. How she could sing and bring the music out of her piano! No wonder she was a bright and shining star in the church choir.

Still thinking, Nathan remembered the day he could restrain himself no longer, but poured forth the old story of love, and if he lived for a thousand years he would never forget the ecstatic happiness of the moment when he learned she fully and freely returned the impulses of his heart. For a few days he was in heaven, then he came to earth again. In other words, the practical things of life could not be ignored. Pearl was a child of luxury, as it were. She was naturally industrious, but her father was a rich man, and gave her as sumptuous a home as the city afforded. Would her parents consent to her entering a life of poverty and denial? Once the thought came of what might possibly be done for Pearl when she married him, but ever afterward he was ashamed of himself that such an idea had ever entered his head. No, he was no fortune hunter. But he must wake up and do something to make better financial progress.

Several times he had heard tales of the lucky finds of the clam diggers. He felt desperate, and something like the spirit of the gambler was in his blood. He went along the river and interviewed some of the clam diggers. He saw how disagreeable the work was and how uncertain its reward, but there was a chance. He decided to take this chance. Thus one day his friends were shocked to learn that he had become a clam digger. Not that a clam digger could not be respectable—but it was clam digging. Pearl knew why he had entered this distasteful life, and he knew she was constantly praying for his success. All the previous summer he had worked, and his reward had not been much greater than if he had remained in the store. A few weeks before he had started in again for the summer season.

On the rustic bench, as his thoughts came nearly to the present, Nathan began to catch his breath, and his hands trembled. He had worked only a few days when success came! Only a few days ago he knew he had found the most valuable pearl ever taken from the Cedar or any Iowa river. It was a beauty, and now he could realize his dreams. He could have a tasty home to take Pearl to, and beside this have enough capital to enter some kind of business. How he gloated over his find! It was so much to him, because it meant the possession of the other Pearl. Then why did he do as he did—why was he so foolish?

He did not take the pearl to a bank for safekeeping, as he should have done. Near the river he had built a small cabin, and while at work he made this his stopping-place. He determined to work the week out with the insane idea that he might make another more or less valuable find. And he wanted it near for just a little while to caress and gaze upon, for it seemed to represent his darling. The pearl was put away in the bottom of a trunk which he kept in his cabin. Two or three times a day he would take out the precious thing and revel in dreams of the happy future.

Hot and cold flashes now shot over Nathan, as he recalled the events of the last two days. Only two days ago! That day he supposed would be his last as a clam digger. He had worked desperately all the forenoon, but the rising flood had driven him from the river. He had eaten a hasty dinner, which he had prepared himself, as usual; then he opened his trunk. He would have a half-hour of ecstasy, then take his treasure to a bank in the city. At the bottom of the trunk was the tin box he knew so well, and he quickly opened the lid. The pearl was gone! For a moment his heart fairly stopped its beating, a blackness came over his eyes and a roaring into his ears. Then he shook off the terrible fear and began a feverish search through the trunk. Search as he would, nothing was found. Knowing it was foolish, he even searched his pockets. He searched over every square inch of his cabin room. In despair, he finally gave up. There was no doubt but that the pearl was stolen.

Who was the thief? On the rustic bench, sick at heart as he had never been in all his life, he was unable to give a guess. Beyond the trees surrounding his cabin, a quarter of a mile away, lived the Grundys. They were surely a disruptable set, but he had not the slightest evidence outside of this fact upon which to base a suspicion. The night before this June morning in the park he had come to the city to see Pearl and tell her all. His heart had failed him, and he had gone to his sister's home instead. There he had poured out his sorrow.

By this time some stragglers were entering the park. Nathan felt that he ought to return to his sister's home and make a pretense of eating breakfast. Just as he arose to do so, a young man he well knew rushed up to him.

"Nathan, have you heard the terrible news?" he blurted out.

"What news?" Nathan aroused himself as he noticed the extreme agitation of the young man.

"Pearl Ames has gone over the dam and her body has not been found yet."

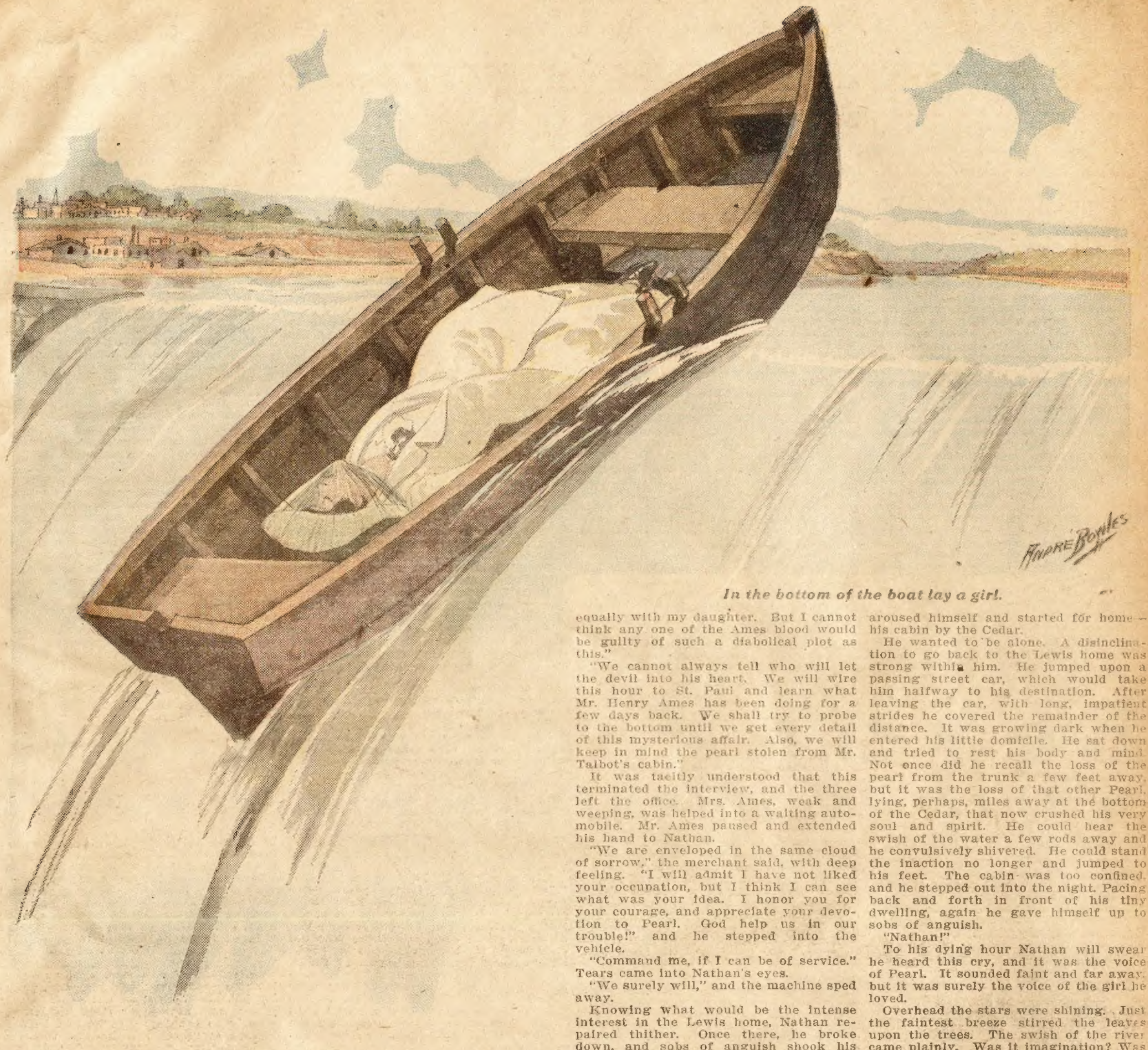
The speaker was surely tactless, for he knew Nathan and Pearl were considered sweethearts. Nevertheless he rattled on:

"She went over the dam in your boat. She probably was dead in the boat before it went over. They found her hat, but can't find her. They found her cloak up by your boat landing. The police are looking for you."

During the recital Nathan stood paralyzed. He realized that the trouble he had been brooding over was as nothing

## TO LEDGER READERS

**Be sure and read "THE CLAM DIGGER; or, A CEDAR RIVER MYSTERY," in this issue, also the new serial for boys, "JACK SEWELL'S FORTUNES; or, AMONG THE PEARL ISLANDS." Both of these are exceptionally fine, thrilling stories. Next week's issue will be filled with good things. Be sure and get it. We have a lot of the best stories ever written awaiting publication in the Ledger. Keep on taking it or you will make a great mistake.**



*In the bottom of the boat lay a girl.*

compared to this affliction which now overwhelmed him. For a minute he tried to speak, but he could not.

"Come!" he finally managed to whisper, and swayed as if he would fall as he started from the park.

An automobile was passing. Nathan saw that the driver was a friend. He held out his hands in supplication, and the machine came to a stop. After a few words of explanation Nathan was in the car and speeding to the police station.

### CHAPTER III.
### HOPE CRUSHED.

AS NATHAN entered the superintendent's office at the police station, all were silent and motionless in an instant. The chief glanced keenly at the young man.

"You have heard?" the chief interrogated.

"Just a few minutes ago," Nathan managed to force the answer from his lips.

"Where were you last night?" The question came abruptly and sternly. For an instant Nathan recoiled as if he had been struck a blow; then he straightened himself and looked the questioner in the eye.

"I realize what may justly be suspected," he now spoke more freely, "but I have nothing to conceal. I was with Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Lewis, my sister and her husband, at their home on the West Side. No one wishes to get at the bottom of this terrible affair more than I, for Miss Ames was my promised wife." Nathan turned and looked squarely at Mr. Ames.

"That's right; it is a time for perfect frankness. The parent spoke quickly, with an approving ring in the voice.

"Let me tell some things," Nathan addressed the chief, who nodded approval.

"A few days ago I found the most valuable pearl probably ever taken from the Cedar. I was so elated, because I thought I could now ask a special boon of Mr. and Mrs. Ames. I knew I could offer a cozy home to the girl I loved." His voice broke, and it was a minute before he could continue.

"Day before yesterday the pearl was stolen from my cabin. I haven't the faintest clew as to the thief. Crushed and despondent, I sought the Lewis home yesterday afternoon and have been there since, as some of the neighbors can tell you. Now——" but he could not complete the sentence except with a gesture of despair.

"I believe you are telling the truth," said the chief, "but did Miss Ames know of your find?"

"She did not—no one, I supposed, did."

"No misunderstanding between yourself and Miss Ames?" ventured the chief.

"Not the least." The reply was prompt and emphatic.

"Mr. Ames, would any one benefit by your daughter's death?" The chief now turned and addressed the merchant.

"It may be my turn to tell some things." Mr. Ames hesitated a moment, then continued: "We received a telegram late last night informing us of the death of my only brother. We would have started on the early morning train for St. Paul but for Pearl's disappearance. My brother's death leaves myself and a son of another brother the only heirs. I have understood that my brother intended to leave the bulk of his property to Pearl, but now my nephew, Henry Ames, may be the chief beneficiary. I do not really know the nature of my brother's will."

"What kind of a person is this Henry Ames?" still questioned the chief.

"I understand that he does not have an exemplary record—is considered wild, in fact. It is because of this fact, I understand, my brother practically disinherited him. He would have shared equally with my daughter. But I cannot think any one of the Ames blood would be guilty of such a diabolical plot as this."

"We cannot always tell who will let the devil into his heart. We will wire this hour to St. Paul and learn what Mr. Henry Ames has been doing for a few days back. We shall try to probe to the bottom until we get every detail of this mysterious affair. Also, we will keep in mind the pearl stolen from Mr. Talbot's cabin."

It was tacitly understood that this terminated the interview, and the three left the office. Mrs. Ames, weak and weeping, was helped into a waiting automobile. Mr. Ames paused and extended his hand to Nathan.

"We are enveloped in the same cloud of sorrow," the merchant said, with deep feeling. "I will admit I have not liked your occupation, but I think I can see what was your idea. I honor you for your courage, and appreciate your devotion to Pearl. God help us in our trouble!" and he stepped into the vehicle.

"Command me, if I can be of service." Tears came into Nathan's eyes.

"We surely will," and the machine sped away.

Knowing what would be the intense interest in the Lewis home, Nathan repaired thither. Once there, he broke down, and sobs of anguish shook his form. The sister threw her arms around his neck and mingled her tears with his in an effort to comfort him. In time the storm of sorrow passed, and he sat down with the Lewises to the midday meal. He choken down some of the food, and then determined to seek the river where his dead sweetheart might be found.

Several were watching along the water's edge for the appearance of the body. Among the number was Sam Grundy, the young man of the morning vigil upon the Fourth street bridge. Several times Nathan had harbored the thought that possibly his nearest neighbors, the Grundys, might be able to explain the disappearance of the pearl, but now, as he noticed the zeal of Sam, he felt ashamed at having such suspicions. Restlessly patrolling up and down the river, offering suggestions and so interested in finding the body of the girl lying somewhere beneath the swiftly moving flood, surely Sam had a heart in him bigger than he was usually given credit for.

Toward evening the searchers decided there was little chance of finding what they sought. The body was probably washed far down the river. Messages had been sent, and it was hoped the body would rise to the surface within a day or two. If not found before, a thorough search would have to be made when the river fell. Leaving a watcher with a searchlight to be used at night, the remainder of the seekers repaired to their homes.

As the sun sank in the west, Nathan stood and gazed at the on-rushing water, where beneath the waves, perhaps her garment caught on some jagged rock, lay all that was mortal of the idol of his heart. If he only knew, he would plunge in and dive to where his loved one lay so cold and quiet. If he never came up again, he would be by her side through all eternity. Sensing the dangerous tendency of his thoughts, he aroused himself and started for home—his cabin by the Cedar.

He wanted to be alone. A disinclination to go back to the Lewis home was strong within him. He jumped upon a passing street car, which would take him halfway to his destination. After leaving the car, with long, impatient strides he covered the remainder of the distance. It was growing dark when he entered his little domicile. He sat down and tried to rest his body and mind. Not once did he recall the loss of the pearl from the trunk a few feet away, but it was the loss of that other Pearl, lying, perhaps, miles away at the bottom of the Cedar, that now crushed his very soul and spirit. He could hear the swish of the water a few rods away and he convulsively shivered. He could stand the inaction no longer and jumped to his feet. The cabin was too confined, and he stepped out into the night. Pacing back and forth in front of his tiny dwelling, again he gave himself up to sobs of anguish.

"Nathan!"

To his dying hour Nathan will swear he heard this cry, and it was the voice of Pearl. It sounded faint and far away, but it was surely the voice of the girl he loved.

Overhead the stars were shining. Just the faintest breeze stirred the leaves upon the trees. The swish of the river came plainly. Was it imagination? Was he vouchsafed a call from the other side of the river of death? He did not know. His sobs now ceased, and he stood in awe and wonder.

Very faint and far away once more came the cry:

"Nathan!"

### CHAPTER IV.
### THE PLOTTERS.

OELWEIN is a stirring little town nearly thirty miles northwest of Waterloo. If the police of the latter and other interested parties had overheard a conversation that occurred in the former town two weeks before the events we have narrated, the mystery of Pearl Ames' disappearance perhaps would soon have been explained. For, having hold of one end of the string, its twistings and turnings might have been followed until the other end was reached. However, no one particularly noticed Henry Ames as he stepped from the passenger train from St. Paul at the Great Western station. Walking across some intervening tracks, he had nearly reached the depot when an unkempt-appearing man stepped up.

"This is Bill Grundy, I suppose," remarked young Ames, as he extended his hand.

"Yes. I have changed more than you have," replied the older man, as if acquiescing to a patent fact.

"Well, you are not the sleek-looking individual you were when running a saloon at Leadville," observed the young man.

"Don't! Keep quiet," whispered Grundy, and a frightened expression shone from his eyes. The two were now on a street leading from the depot.

"All right. Where shall we go to have a quiet talk?"

"I have not been in the burg long, but we will walk until we find a place."

The men uttered but few remarks as

they walked along. With no apparent destination in view, they finally reached a comparatively high portion of the city upon which the standpipe of the waterworks towered aloft. One or two small dwellings stood in the vicinity, but no persons seemed to be in sight. Seating themselves upon a plot of grass, Ames offered Grundy a cigar and proceeded to light one for himself.

"Folks can't get near us here unless we see them, so we can talk," he remarked. For a few minutes both puffed away in silence. As they recline upon the sward, let us draw a brief word picture of the two men.

The older man, Bill Grundy, as he was generally called by his associates, had passed the half-century mark, and showed it. He had a rough, unkempt appearance from the rusty hat to the unblackened shoes. A coarse red beard streaked with gray covered half the face, and long, uncombed hair fell about his ears. The eyes showed a gleam of craftiness, and the expression of the whole face indicated a lack of will—a record of a misspent life. But as one looked at the worn, sin-marred face, sometimes there appeared an expression of good nature and good will that, under different conditions than his life had known, might have developed a different character from the Bill Grundy of the present.

As for the younger man, selfishness and greed were plainly evident to any observer—not the avariciousness of the miser, but the demand of the profligate and libertine. Light hair, gray eyes, and a clean-shaven but dissipated face would strike the superficial observer, but a closer survey would disclose the cruel mouth and weak chin. Every air and action showed a fast and furious life, and although only twenty-five years had been passed, heart and principle had been almost consumed in the furnace of desire. His dress was of the latest pattern, but his figure was undersized and undeveloped. All in all, he was not an attractive young man to the general passer-by.

"You see I got your letter. How did you know where I was?" finally spoke the older man.

"Over a year ago I dropped off at Waterloo for a few hours," replied the younger man. "No need to tell just what I had in mind, but I didn't make myself known to Uncle George—I'm bright enough to know I am not the kind he and his would be proud to show around. But I just happened to see you. I thought it best for you and me at that time to keep shady. Now I need you and can give you a big boost in the world for a favor you can do me."

"In what way?" asked Grundy, and there was a note of uneasiness in the tone. Indeed, he felt that Ames would not seek this interview without there being something ominous behind it all.

"Let me explain the situation so you can see plainly what must be done." Glancing around, Ames stretched himself upon the ground. Throwing away his cigar, he began:

"Ten years ago father died—mother died a year before. Uncle Tom, at St. Paul, took me in. He wanted me to walk a chalk line. I fooled him a lot of times, but he caught onto some things. I finally ran away. That was the time I was in Colorado and got mixed up with you, and found out what I did about your affairs."

The narrator shot a gleam at his companion much as a cat might at a mouse. The listener grew slightly pale and shifted uneasily from his position upon the grass.

"Five years ago," the other continued, "I got back to St. Paul. I tried to make up with Uncle Tom, for I began to see how important it was. I played the nice young man all I could, but every once in a while he would find out what I was up to on the sly. He lectured me and, of course, I promised to be good. He used to keep me going in good style, but after every lecture he drew the purse strings tighter. I tried to make this up by cards and girls. Sometimes I was flush; sometimes I was the other way.

"Over a year ago there was a big rumpus, and I was kicked out of Uncle Tom's home and good graces. He made a will leaving me practically nothing. You know his wife has been dead for years. Well, he willed his property to my cousin, Pearl Ames, of Waterloo. Uncle has lots of family pride, and in the will he has it fixed that if Pearl dies the money goes to me. I suppose he thinks there is little likelihood of such a contingency. If Pearl should pass in her checks, he would rather I had the property than strangers. He isn't much on philanthropy.

"Well, the old man got sick some time ago. I came around and shed tears, and got taken into his home again—but not deep enough into his heart so that he will change that legal document. He has his suspicions of me yet. But he is losing strength fast. The doctor says he will die inside of a few weeks. Uncle has me writing to his brother George—Pearl's father—but I don't send out the letters. So the folks at Waterloo don't know how bad off Uncle Tom is. Uncle has become so anxious that he has sent me down to urge the family to hurry up and visit him while he is this side of the golden gates. But this is as far as I am going. I am going back with all sorts of cock and bull stories. I will try to keep hold of things until the end. When that comes, if she hasn't before, Pearl Ames must go the same road. That is the reason why I do not wish to be seen in Waterloo. This might implicate me. You must get that girl out of the world."

"Oh, I can't Hank!" ejaculated Grundy, in evident distress and perplexity.

"I will freely give you ten thousand dollars for the job—perhaps double. I can afford this, for Uncle Tom must have from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars."

"I don't want to!" was almost whimpered.

"I thought you might have cold feet, so I have another string to pull," and Ames smiled sardonically.

Bill Grundy made no reply, but a shiver ran over his body, for he realized what was coming.

"You know you are wanted in Leadville for murder," bluntly announced the plotter.

"But I had to shoot, or he would have killed me," pleaded the other man.

"That may be, but you know you will have hard work in proving this. If the Colorado officers had you, you would probably spend the rest of your days behind the bars—perhaps worse. You don't want me to write a letter to Leadville, do you?" There was a cold glitter in the eyes of the one who had the ex-saloonkeeper of Leadville in his power, and the latter individual realized the situation.

"So you want me to get away with her?" It was a play for time rather than to obtain information.

"Precisely."

"How?"

"That's for you to figure out. Your dutiful wife and affectionate son," there was a sarcasm in the voice, "will help you out. They know ten thousand dollars is not picked up every day. But the job must positively be done between two and three weeks from now. What can I depend upon?"

For a minute Bill Grundy sat with drooping head, then he arose and paced back and forth a short distance. Several times the promenade was repeated, and the walker was conscious of being watched just as a cat watches a helpless, captured mouse.

"It's a bargain." The captive came to a stop before the captor and extended his hand.

"Bully boy! I knew you would come around!" The schemer leaped to his feet and extended his hand. "Now I must get the next train back to St. Paul. No one but Uncle Tom knows I am out of the city. He won't tell, because I have him thinking that folks will believe him weak and childish to crawl after a brother who pays no attention to him." The heartless wretch laughed softly.

A few details were gone over, arrangements made for communication, then the plotters left the vicinity of the standpipe, each going a different direction.

"I've got a tough problem," muttered Bill Grundy, after walking alone a minute or two. "I must get that ten thousand dollars, and sooner or later Hank Ames must be sent to h—l where he belongs."

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

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# Beyond the Law

## Or, Their Deeper Right -:- By E. W. Bateman

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### CHAPTER V.

MY writing next morning took a happy turn. Everything that I saw had something good in it, something of the happy hour I had spent the night before. I took my assignment early and went out whistling. Circumstance follows the trend of human life more closely and surely than water seeking its level. Had I been on time, instead of ten minutes early, I would have missed Madden and saved myself great sorrow. Ten minutes either way would have cheated fate, yet that power would not be denied.

I found Madden crouched over his desk telephone with a look on his face like a lion that sniffs an enemy in the brush. He was listening so intently that he didn't hear me come in, and I became alert in a moment. Only when big crime was committed did Frank Madden wear that look. Crime was the enemy his nostrills sniffed, and the "bull dog" look that had made him famous settled on his features. Finally the voice on the other end of the wire stopped, and he closed the conversation with an abrupt "I'll be out immediately."

He looked at me with a start, and then smiled to hide his confusion. "Glad to see you, Johnny," he rapped out. "Want in on something big?"

"Do I? Do I look alive to you?"

"You certainly do, my boy. But I must take you along as my assistant, for newspaper men are not exactly wanted yet. It's a killing." He looked long at me and I knew he was thinking of the unidentified man, whose case was the first failure Madden had registered in years. It rankled him more than words could tell, and we had ceased speaking of it, but he brought the subject up this time.

"This is a killing, Valle, that is going to make this town shudder before night. I am going to solve it before I ever perform another official act. Yes," he smiled, "that other case still hurts. Thank Heaven, there are clews to this one! Come, let us go."

We strode away down the street, this watchdog of the law and I, brushing elbows with people whom we did not know, and who would never know us. They would read Madden's name, written by me, a thousand times within that week. The fascination of the Game lay there. Then I thought a moment, and seemed to smell the perfume of a rose. I smiled to myself and then laughed when Madden looked puzzled. It seemed too good to keep from him, but I did it.

We boarded a street car at the nearest corner, and were soon whirling away to the outer edge of town toward a residential section that was ultra-fashionable. It had grown up around a popular country club, and the town had grown out to it. I least expected Madden to have work in this direction, and he saw my surprised looks directed out of the window. It was his turn to chuckle.

Madden signaled the conductor directly in front of one of the finest residences in the city, and swung down quickly. I followed, and together we trudged up the long driveway. Madden rung the great bell on the street door, while my wonder increased. Was he not mistaken? Surely there could be no sudden death and mystery in that palace.

A servant opened the door quietly, and Madden handed him his card. He was gone a moment, and came back preceded by a thin, wiry man whom I recognized as one of the leading bankers of the city and owner of the home. He received Madden cordially, and when I was introduced as an assistant, shook hands with me in the same manner. He had a hard, stern face, which he wore like a mask, but it was torn by grief and worry. The latter seemed struggling for mastery, but he had his feelings well in hand.

"Gentlemen, I have asked the police on an important matter, and I am truly glad they sent you." He looked at Madden, who bowed slightly. "I have many reasons for saying this, chief of them being that I trust your discretion." He paused and cleared his throat nervously, and I smiled inwardly when I thought of sitting there, a newspaper man, and he appraising the word "discretion" highly.

"Something has happened to me that has cast a gloom over my life," he continued. "I have always expected it, yet it came like a blow in the face. Mr. Madden, during last night my brother was killed—foully stabbed to death!" And he wiped cold beads of sweat from his brow with a bare hand.

I sprang to my feet with a low cry, and Madden, though forewarned, was just as bad. "Your brother!" he cried. "I did not know you had a brother."

Madden was truly astonished, for the banker and he had been acquainted for years.

"Not many did," he answered, sadly. "He was gone for twelve years prior to this visit. He had been here about six months, and he never went out at all. Not a half-dozen of his old friends had spoken to him even, and those who did soon forgot it. He would sit in the house all day, and take long walks at night, either alone or accompanied by his servant. I did not understand, but never questioned him. He kept all his secrets well." He stopped abruptly, and I read in the halt many things regarding the dead man that the speaker never intended to tell.

"I would like to see the room," was the only comment Madden made. The banker nodded and led the way to the second story of the building.

We entered the dead man's room, expecting to find confusion of the wildest. This was not the cast. Not even a chair was overturned, and the floor, littered with many papers and letters, made the only break in the neat appearance of the room. Madden did not look at the body lying upon the bed. He glanced searchingly around the room, and then turned to our guide.

"Has anything been moved, Mr. Henry?" he inquired.

"Nothing at all," came the answer. "I wouldn't even allow the body to be touched until you came."

Madden went slowly up to the bed, measuring distances and positions of furniture as he went. He looked long at the grewsome sight on the bed, and I came up and peered over his shoulder.

The victim was lying across the foot of the bed, fully dressed, and his clothes were slightly torn by struggle, either with death or his assailant. His jaw was firmly set and his brows drawn together, giving the face a fierce setting. In the center of his throat was a slender knife, the handle of which was shaped oddly like a crucifix.

"He died fighting," I thought to myself, and wondered at the skill of the man who had driven the knife home. A moment later I was lost in the study of the face and figure.

A good build of a man he was, too—slender and wiry like his brother, but with a harder look. His face was marked by strong passions, by strange likes and dislikes. Somehow I gathered from that corpse that the man himself, no matter to what realm he had flown, was enjoying the situation his demise had created. It was a queer notion, but it grew upon me.

In the meanwhile Madden was at his best, and I felt certain of his success from the start. He looked through the dead man's papers with such care that I became interested and began searching with him. They were mainly personal notes, and I was surprised to find two marked "Mexico City." These were the most interesting, as they dealt with the title of lands he seemed to possess in one of the eastern states of that country. They were signed by a firm of English lawyers in that city, and they bore no good news, informing him plainly that his titles were not good. Other papers and newspaper clippings led instantly to the fact that he had been in Mexico in recent months, and this was confirmed a moment later when Madden asked the question: "Was your brother in Mexico recently?"

The banker replied without hesitation that he had been living there for some time. He added that he owned property in that country, and really considered it his home. Madden made note of this as he arose from his task.

"Are all the servants on duty, Mr. Henry? If they are, have them all gather in the library. Now, do you please give me an account of all that happened last night, as you know it."

The banker nodded and rang for his butler. He then gave Madden's order about the servants, and began his tale after the man had left the room.

"I knew nothing of the occurrence until this morning, Mr. Madden," he began. "I was awakened by my butler, and found him puzzled and frightened. He had gone to my brother's room several times to awaken him, but could get no response from the locked door. I went up at once, and found what he said was true. I sent for my pass key and opened it quickly. You see what we found." He paused a moment. "As soon as I could collect myself I sent for all the servants and questioned them closely. This was all that I could gather.

"My brother had gone for a short walk early in the evening, and had dismissed his private secretary, who had accompanied him, at the door. Charles, the butler, admitted him, and I trust his word absolutely. Now, gentlemen, here is the whole mystery of the situation.

"A few minutes after his secretary and his servant departed for their lodging in the city, Charles says my brother came downstairs and walked the long hall in an agitated manner, muttering to himself. After awhile he became quieter, and went into the living-room, telling Charles he was expecting callers, and to admit them as soon as they called.

"They came, or rather she came. It was a woman." His voice faltered for a moment, as if he was ashamed of something he felt his brother was guilty of. "Charles admitted her at once, and she went into the room with my brother.

"She had been there but a few moments when Charles, who was on his post until a late hour, saw him come rushing out. He was as pale as if he had seen a ghost, and went directly up the stairs to his room. The woman came out and walked rapidly away from the door as soon as Charles had opened it for her. She did not seem excited, he says, and he thought nothing more of it. That was all until this morning. That is the clew, sir, that I believe will solve the mystery."

"Very likely, Mr. Henry," said Madden. "All great mysteries are simplicity when the right word is spoken or the right thing done by all concerned. What was this woman like?"

"We have no description of her except that she was young in appearance. She kept her face well covered while passing in and out of the house. She was wrapped in a long cloak of dark material and did not remove it."

"I am ready for the servants," said Madden, and Henry signaled for them to come in.

Their tales were all the same. What they knew of the younger brother was practically nothing, and they had all been asleep at the time of the nocturnal visitor. Had they noticed any one loitering around the house? They all agreed positively they had not. What had happened on the night before to arouse their suspicions in any way? Nothing, they said. Had they examined the house for any signs of forcible entry on the night before? No one had thought to do that. Madden let them go with a smile, realizing they knew nothing about the matter and were too much impressed to tell if they did know.

He was preparing to go outside and make a search, when Henry detained him. "The secretary of my brother and his body servant have just come up from the city," he said. "Would you like to talk to them?" Madden assented eagerly, and they were shown in.

I was facing a window when they entered, and turned to see a slender youth of perhaps my own age entering the door. I passed him by with a glance, however. Behind him, with a look of savage muteness on his face, stood the identical man who had attacked the girl the night I had defended her. He recognized me as I turned.

With a snarl he turned to me, but was grasped by the secretary. A mutter of rapid-fire jargon passed between them that evidently mystified both Henry and Madden. I understood, but tried to follow their look. I saw in a moment that the secretary had the man in his control, and no harm would come to me.

Yet he was wild with anger, and I could not help but think of the ugly club that swung over my head that night. These brutes had been the servants of the dead man. What manner of man was he?

The secretary saw the strained situation in a moment, for he was as cunning as he looked. He spoke in his best English, telling the banker how he regretted the death of his employer. He asked to see the body, and all of us went up to the room again.

The effect of the dead man on both of them was strange. The secretary reeled in the doorway, and his face blanched like paper. The servant crept up to the bed with his soft, padding motion, and grasped the knife between his fingers. He uttered hoarse, guttural noises in his throat, and murder was in his eyes as he tenderly caressed the dead man's face. He faced us with that strange dignity that the savage can assume at moments, and walked out of the door without deigning to speak to any one.

Madden began to draw out the secretary, who had seemed perfectly willing to talk a few moments before. Now he was like a clam, and exerted all his cunning in trying to avoid Madden's inquiries. He would feign ignorance of English, evade direct answers, and finally grew sullen. Madden did not oppose him in any way, and let him go when he saw that he would no longer be of service. He turned to Banker Henry.

"I will be through within a few moments, Mr. Henry," he said, "excepting a search of the grounds. I will not see you again this morning, so will tell you the status of the case, as I see it. Your brother was murdered last night, and appearances indicate positively that it happened in the early hours. It was done by persons at present unknown to any one, but who left traces behind. The knife is the main piece of evidence, as it is a peculiar one. Your servants know nothing of it, I am convinced. As to the late visitor's part, I am not so sure. She may have been simply a woman of business, who had to see your brother on that account; it may have been otherwise. We are bound to think it was otherwise. If so, she had an accomplice, as your brother was much alive when he left her.

"We have there the deed. The motive is the most important thing. I shall not state to you what I think it was, save that it hasn't the appearance of robbery.

"I shall need all of your brother's papers sent to me. The history of his stay in Mexico will add much to the solving of his death, I think. You will send them down?" The banker nodded an affirmative.

"Another thing." Madden looked at the banker clearly. "I know this thing has touched you closely, but you cannot avoid some publicity. The facts are better for the newspaper men than something they will be obliged to suppose. I will give the facts from my department through my formal report, and I would advise you not to refuse them a formal statement. Then, too, I never work with the people in the dark as to crime and outlaws. In the past I have confided in them. Only a few times have I been double-crossed. Do you agree with me?" The speaker smiled at Henry, who was mildly shocked by this view. Finally he saw the wisdom of it, for he smiled gravely in return. "I will do as you think best," he said, and Madden thanked him.

Together we went out of the big doors, and around to the ground under the murdered man's window. The ground was a soft bed of flowers, and would have been cut to pieces from sharp footsteps. Yet it was untouched. From the cement walk on which we stood, the window was as inaccessible as the walls of an ancient tower. The house was heavily built, and a narrow, open balcony some twenty feet above the ground was the sole projection from any of the exposed windows. We made a close search, however, to make sure of all the different angles from which the house could be approached. It was simply impossible without making some mark on the soil or coming in a flying machine.

Madden was not at a loss, as I was, regarding how to proceed. I saw that he had an idea about that balcony that had not occurred to me, for he made back to the house with all speed. He went again to the room, I close behind him. We threw open the window and stepped out upon the balcony. Madden went eagerly to the corner post, which was heavy marble and so stoutly constructed that it could not be shaken with all his weight. He looked at it carefully, and then bent over it for some moments. He drew up with a sigh, and looked away from the window.

At an angle of some forty degrees from the balcony stood a magnificent oak tree, with branches that spread within twenty feet of us. It was of heavy foliage, and would have hidden a dozen men. Madden's voice was trembling with eagerness.

"If a man was standing in that tree, Vaile, just as far out as he could get, do you think he could toss a rope over this corner post?" He was bending over the round head of the post again, and did not look up at my answer.

"If he was an expert, he might do it once out of ten times in the dark," I answered, catching the drift of his idea.

"Then look at this."

I bent over the post with him, and around the weather stain of many months was a clean white mark, just the size of an ordinary rope. The conclusion was too evident.

"This was the way the slayer came, Johnny." Madden's voice was now confident. "He was an expert, and he got a hold with his rope. It was but the work of a moment for him to reach the window and then get into the room. The rest has already solved itself. Just between you and me"—Madden smiled as he said it, for he had few secrets from any one—"all that we have to do in this case is to look into this man's history. We will find the man's name who killed him in it, and then we must get him. You will help me, won't you, if you can?"

"You can wager on that, old man," I replied quickly, though I could not help reserving the thought of that savage face of a short while before.

What did it all mean? I was being drawn into something that was beyond my depth, mixed into a strange muddle that refused to settle. We went in again.

"To the foot of the tree," said Madden, and we were there in a moment. I searched with him, but I was certain of the mode of the invader, and circled under the outer limbs to see what I could find. Madden called to me with a cry of triumph. He was bending over tracks upon the ground, and I was about to hurry to him when something caught my eye.

Lying directly in my path and only a step from me lay a red rose. It burned in the clear sunlight like a flame of fire or a dash of blood. I bent quickly and picked it up. I had seen but one other like it—and it lay next to my heart!

## CHAPTER VI.

"THERE are all the clews you need, Johnny," narrated Madden, as a speeding car took us back to the city. "We have the knife, the manner of the deed, and the dead man. He has a past of adventurous, even doubtful, nature. We will win this time, boy." He slapped me upon the shoulder.

I heard him very faintly, for in my ears was the roar of falling air castles. He hurt me with his great, fine confidence of valuable facts, generously saying "we" in speaking of the case. I tore my own mind with my betrayal of him. Then that rose! The very air seemed red to my eyes. When I answered him my voice seemed mockery, as my thoughts were. I don't know what I said. I only know that I wanted to escape from all human kind for just a soul's breathing space, that I might right myself and play fairly across the board.

"Tell the facts, Johnny, no matter whom they hit," was my friend's parting injunction. It was not new to me; he had said it many times before. Now it touched me to the quick, and I could only nod to him. I had work to do and hurried to headquarters.

Our story was not a "scoop," as the police report gave other papers the chief facts. Yet I managed to put the bald facts of the sensational murder in such a manner that all my fellow workers spoke of it. I wrote it as if Madden had been standing over me. Already I knew I was weakening to a promise I had made myself. I wanted to help him for the way he had helped me. More, I owed it to him.

I left the office with the street edition, though office rules said that I must see the "late" edition go to press. I knew the little breach was permissible, and I was fighting a great fight alone. Swinging aboard a car without noting where it was going, I was soon on the way to the eastern part of the city. By chance the car stopped at a city park, and I swung down and wandered in.

What was I to tell him? I sought the most sheltered spot that I could find and started to solve my difficulties. I looked at it in a cold-blooded way, summoning all my common sense to bear. That rose had driven home the last fact I needed to disbelieve in her. She was undoubtedly concerned in two murders in some way. I had saved her from death at least once. What was she? "Adventuress" rose to my lips, and I grew sick with scorn of myself and of her. Then before my eyes there rose a face of pure light; eyes that glowed when they met mine; a form of utmost grace, and lips that were speaking to me. Ah! I was torn between two fires. On one side stood the faith of a friend, and his right to the toll of true friendship. Against him was a woman, an unknown love. My brain was fighting for him; my heart was her own, though it might be her hands were stained with blood.

It was nearing nightfall, yet I had not decided. I sat with my head resting on my hands, and found it was hot and aching. I knew I should go to my lodging, yet I could not make the first move, with dishonor almost, hanging over me.

Dishonor? The word stuck by me. I had accepted from Madden what I could not or would not return. He was my pal, the pledge of the American as strong as the "blood-brother" of the Oriental. What I knew would arm him with vital facts in two mysteries. What other course was open?

Reproachful eyes looked at me from a vision, but I steeled myself. I would tell Frank Madden all I knew, trusting him to protect her all that he could. Little, indeed, that would be. She had not pledged me to secrecy, but my soul was ground to dust with the part I was to play.

I rose and made my way to the entrance. I looked neither to the right nor left, and paid no heed to those who passed me by. It would have paid me, but I did not know.

At the entrance I noticed a cab standing. It had grown nearly dark, but I noted that the wheels were off the drive by a foot, and were cutting the turf. "Some poor driver will get pinched if I don't warn him," I thought, and I crossed over to tell him. It was proof positive the good Samaritan often misses his cue.

I had scarcely reached the side of the vehicle, when two men sprang out from behind it, and the driver swung down from the box. I saw I had made a mistake, and would have walked on, when one of them stepped squarely in my way. I looked closely in his face. It was the secretary of the man who had just been murdered.

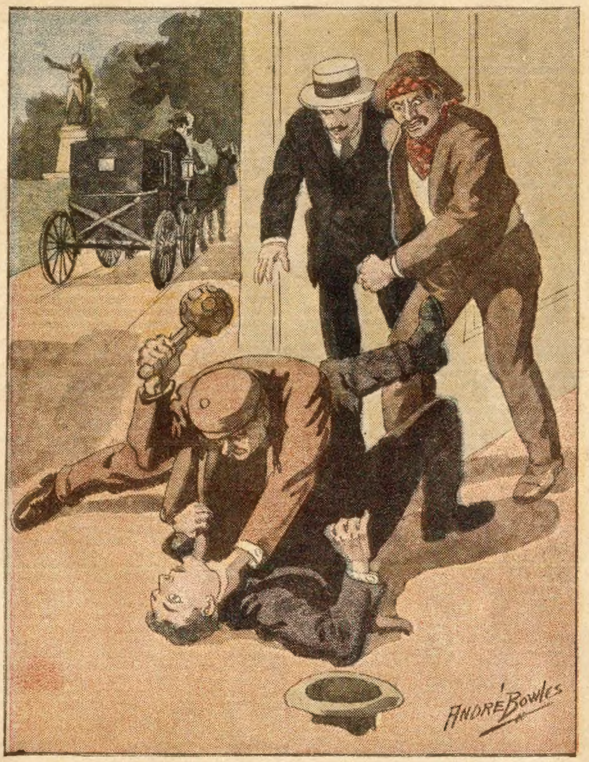
With a low cry I flung myself full at his throat. I took him by surprise, and he keeled over, taking me with him. I struck him once, when the other two fell upon my back. Fingers of iron clutched at my throat, and in an instant I was pinned to the ground powerless. Lying face up, I saw a terrible club swing up above my head. I closed my eyes, knowing that I could expect no mercy. Then it happened.

Something like a tiger launched itself into the middle of the scramble. I heard a cry from my assailant, and the next instant he was thrown off my shoulders as though he were a feather. I sprang to my feet, and without thinking grasped my nearest foe. He tore loose from me, and as a call came from the cab he ran for it. Far up the driveway I heard a shrill police whistle. Then came the rattle of wheels as the carriage rolled away at a rapid pace.

A stranger had me by the arm. "Quick!" he cried, and the next moment he was running off on a tangent from the carriage and the fast-coming policeman. For several moments we scurried along, keeping away from the main path until the sounds of the carriage died away in the distance. We stopped under one of the park lights, where I got a first glimpse of my rescuer.

He was a tall, slender youth, with a face that was hauntingly familiar, yet I had never seen him before. He did not look to be an American, yet he had clear gray eyes and fought with both fists like a Yankee born and bred. He looked at me and laughed daringly.

"A close call, my friend!" he said, with a smile that showed all of his white



*I saw a terrible club above my head.*

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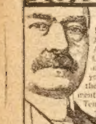

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teeth. "Another moment and you would have gone the route of many a good man. What have you done to them?" The queer way he accented "them" made me look at him hard, for he spoke English with ease, yet he evidently knew them as well as did I.

"I know too much," I answered, hardly knowing what to say to him.

"Then we are in the same way," he said, soberly. "I know and have done too much to them."

"You saved my life just now," I said to him, extending my hand. "I owe you just that amount of thanks." He grasped my hand warmly, and laughed gayly at the way I had spoken.

"You are a man after my own heart," he said. "I'll tell you that you sprung a trap set for me. I passed you going out of the park, and turned to follow you out closely, so they could not attack me. If they had not heard the police, like as not two birds with one stone would have been their luck."

"Do you know them?" I asked, feeling that he did.

"Do I know them?" he laughed again, rather mockingly. "I have just killed their master." With all the enjoyment of a good actor, he noted the effect his words had on me. "I had to do it. He stood in my way, an unrighteous obstacle that really had no right to live."

"Why do you tell me?" I exclaimed, when I found my voice. "Why, it would hang you if the officers were to find it out." My brain reeled when I thought of what that calm statement would mean to Frank Madden.

"I know you will not tell," he replied. Have I not just saved your life?" Then I was sorry that he had been the one. I was face to face with a strong man, and unconsciously I realized that he would demand payment from me for the saving. I could refuse him nothing in good faith. Truly I owed him my life.

"I want you to believe me when I say that he was unworthy," he continued. "I am going to ask you to pay back to me what you say I have given you tonight. In two hours I will face a crisis in my life. I was wandering in this park to find a man hungry and desperate enough to undertake an enterprise with me. Chance and good fortune thrust you in my way. We would have settled scores with them at once, but I saw the officer coming even before they did; now comes my final tub. They will meet me again. You owe your life to me, you say. Well, I am ready now for payment."

"What shall we have to do?" I said, sick at heart. Not from fear, for during the past few hours I had forgotten what it was. I realized that the circumstances of that case were whirling me in again, just when I had resolved to tell Madden what I knew. Would this man deny me that privilege?

"We are going to meet that secretary in a battle of wits and brawn," he said exultingly, stretching his lean body toward mine. "That will be the final scene. He is a worthy and foul antagonist. If I win, we come out safe. If he wins, we both die." He spoke as simply as if it was taking a sip of water, that thing of dying. "Will you go?"

"I will," I answered slowly, "provided that the last payment to you will be when we have conquered or lost."

He extended his lean brown hand to mine. "It is a bargain," he said. "Come, let us be going."

Strolling along quietly with the murderer that Madden sought, and under his command, it seemed to me that the world had suddenly turned upside down. Four hours before I had been convinced that the woman I loved was in the killing of the banker's brother. Now the actual doer of the crime was in my clutch, yet I was in his power. I would have liked him but for that. I could not blame him for the crime as yet, for I had shaped my thoughts with horror of those two savages who had served the one who was dead. But his readiness to use me through my gratitude, and his deadly determination to kill again, disgusted me with him. What was she to him? I dared not wonder, and I was sure I would never see her again.

My guide increased his pace. He was headed for that deadly Mexican quarter which I had learned to hate. Was all tragedy in that city buried there? I was given small time to wonder, for before many moments we were to the north of it, and swinging in block by block. He halted, and the next moment we were climbing the steps of a handsome residence. The door opened noiselessly, and we stepped inside—the house of the girl!

In a moment all feeling left me. It is one of the temperaments of my Anglo-Saxon forefathers, and I summoned it with all force. I literally froze into a calm that was deadly. My companion did not notice it.

He left me standing alone, but only for a moment. I heard him calling, and the next instant a rush of feet and a glad little cry. Then the door of the hallway opened and she stood there with him.

For a moment she just looked and looked, as if her eyes would not serve her. Then, when she saw the look on my face, she threw up her head like a tigress scenting battle. Neither of the three spoke, for the man was watching us with a curious look. Just that little move of hers was all that told him everything.

"Here is my message bearer," he said to her. "I saved him tonight from them, and while he has told me nothing of his quarrel, he is willing to repay me. If I succeed he will come back with the package." I listened here. "If we do not, neither of us will return. Look where you did before." He laughed in his mocking way, while her face blanched white in that peculiar way it had. Almost with a single motion he stepped back behind the door, and it closed behind him, leaving us alone.

In an instant she stood before me, eagerly searching my face for one atom of feeling. She looked in vain, for it was not there. She recoiled as if I had struck her, and again the battle signs showed in her eyes. "You have but a moment to speak," she whispered fiercely. "Won't you ask me to explain? Won't you say just one word?"

"No," I answered shortly. "What would I say to you?"

Ah, that look of her eyes! I cannot forget it, even now. The cruel emphasis I placed on "you" brought the red surging to her cheeks. She stepped back, and just bent her head once, like a flower before the heat that kills it. Then she was gone, also.

I waited for him whom I was going to aid, while in me grew a rage that burned slowly, like the fires of hell. I hated the world, my part in life, this thing I was drawn in but could not fathom. Why was I cursed with it?

More eager than I to go, he was soon with me, and we stepped out again into the night. At the corner a carriage was waiting, and he spoke to the driver in Spanish, but I did not catch the address. We whirled away, he sitting opposite me, and each flashing street light showed him drawn with a tension of coming conflict.

"Listen," he whispered to me. "I do not even know your name, but I trust you as I have trusted no one else. You are going to see the end of a long struggle. The man I am going to meet is a traitor and a spy, wanted in my unhappy country." He waved to the South with a gesture that was unconsciously noble. "You know him as a servitor, I as some one else. I play the battle of wits until I find that he has a packet on his person. Then we fight them." He drew up his body sharply. "The talk will amount to nothing. Just to know that he has it. Then we go for them, and it will be their lives against our own. Three to two. Are you afraid?"

I growled back, and he laughed. It seemed that tragedy or danger made him laugh, like a child first seeing a circus clown.

We traveled rapidly through the business center and away to the East. It was not a savory section where we were heading, but both the driver and my companion knew the road well. Finally we halted before a little wooden rooming-house, with its adjacent bar crowded with the people of the underworld. We mounted the stairs in the front unaccosted, and walked down a dim hall to a room in the rear where a single gas jet burned and flickered. The door was wide open. We entered.

The conclusion of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

# THE GOOSE GIRL.

Once upon a time there was a princess who was both beautiful and sweet. She was betrothed to a prince who lived in a far away country, and when the time for the wedding came her mother, the old queen, who loved her dearly, gave her a horse named Falada, who could speak, and started her off with her waiting maid for the prince's kingdom.

Now, when the princess and her maid had passed beyond the old queen's dominion and the poor little princess was quite helpless in a strange country, the wicked maid commanded her to get down from her horse and change clothes with her.

The little princess was meek and gentle, and did as she was told, and then the wicked maid, clothed in the beautiful gown and the golden crown, mounted Falada and bade the princess to follow behind.

So when they came at last to the prince's country the prince, seeing the maid riding on the white horse and crowned with the golden crowd, took her for his bride and led her at once into the palace, while the real princess was sent to herd geese with a goose boy named Curdken. Soon after this the false bride, who was afraid that Falada might tell the truth to the prince, asked him to have the horse's head cut off. The prince thought it a strange request, but he did as his bride asked, and sent Falada to the slaughterer.

Now, at the edge of the town there was a great gate, through which the real princess had to pass every morning to herd her geese, and when she heard that Falada was to be killed she begged the slaughterer to nail the horse's head over this gate, so that she might see it every day. And the next morning, when she and Curdken were driving their flock through the gateway, the princess looked up as she passed under and said:

"Oh, Falada, 'tis you hang there!"

And the head replied:

"'Tis you pass under, princess fair.
If your mother only knew
Her heart would surely break in two."

Then the princess drove the geese through the common and sat down to comb her hair. Her hair was of pure gold, and when she unloosed it it glittered so in the sun that Curdken wanted to pull some out and play with it. But the princess shook her head and said softly:

"Wind, wind, gently sway,
Blow Curdken's hat away:
Let him chase o'er field and wold
Till my locks of ruddy gold,
Now astray and hanging down,
Are combed and platted in a crown."

And a gust of wind blew Curdken's hat over hill and dale, and when he returned from chasing it the princess' hair was neatly plaited under her kerchief again. Curdken was angry, and he ran back to the palace and told the prince about it. The prince wasn't happy with his new bride, and when he heard this strange story he began to wonder. So he sent Curdken back to the geese, and that evening when the princess and Curdken were coming back from the common the prince hid himself behind the great gate. And, sure enough, when the princess passed under, she looked up at the horse's head and said:

"Oh, Falada, 'tis you hang there!"

And the head replied.

"'Tis you pass under, princess fair,
If your mother only knew
Her heart would surely break in two."

When the prince heard this he sprang out from behind the gate and, catching the real princess by the hand, begged her to tell him the whole story. But the gentle little princess only wept and shook her head. So the prince looked at the horse's head and said:

"Falada, I ask you,
Which is the princess. Tell me true.

And the head replied:

"You hold the princess by the hand,
The fairest maid in all the land."

And then a gust of wind came and blew away the princess' kerchief and blew Curdken's hat over hill and dale, and while Curdkin chased his hat the prince looked a the little princess, with all of her beautiful golden hair falling around her shoulders and he knew she was a real princess. So he took her in his arms, and she told him the whole story. Then they went back to the palace and were married amid great rejoicing, and the false waiting maid was sent to help Curdken chase his hat over hill and dale.

* * *

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# Snares of Fate

## Or, Tangled Threads

### By Emma Howard Wight

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Begun in No. 51, December 20. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

### CHAPTER XV.

### THE CHOICE.

"GEORGE, what is troubling you?" asked Mary Stanley, laying her hand on Dr. Wiley's arm, as they stood in his office a few days later.

"What makes you think that I am troubled?" parried Doctor Wiley, avoiding her earnest, questioning eyes, and busying himself wrapping up the bottle of liniment for Uncle Ned's rheumatism which had brought Mary to his office.

"I can see that you are, George," she replied simply.

For a moment he said nothing, then he turned to her.

"You are right, Mary: I am troubled. A man can hardly help being upset when he is suspected of theft."

"Theft? You suspected of theft?" she exclaimed incredulously. She smiled. "Impossible!"

A smile that was partly ironic and partly bitter passed over his lips.

"It is quite true," he declared. "Sit down, Mary, and I will tell you all about it."

He drew forward a chair and she sat down. Dr. Wiley stood leaning on the high top of his office desk.

"As you are aware, Mary, I am treasurer of the Mission Society," he began. She nodded, her eyes on his face. "Mrs. Ridgeley left five hundred dollars to the Mission Society," he continued. "The money was paid to me. I placed it in the safe in the vestry-room to remain there until the society met, when it would be decided what disposition to make of the money. The society had a meeting two days ago. I opened the safe and found the money gone."

He paused.

"What had become of it?" asked Mary.

Dr. Wiley shook his head with a slight smile.

"I only wish I knew," he replied. It's a mystery. I thought I was the only one who knew the money was in the safe in the vestry-room. But it appears some one did know that it was there, and it could only have been removed by some one who understood the combination that opened the safe."

"And you are suspected of having taken the money?" exclaimed Mary, with passionate indignation. "Preposterous! What an outrage!"

"They suspect me of having kept the money and invented the story of having placed it in the safe," Doctor Wiley explained quietly.

"They ought to be ashamed of themselves!" cried Mary. "They know you are utterly incapable of doing a thing of that kind."

"Well, there's no denying that the thing has a queer look," said Dr. Wiley. "I have no way of proving that I placed the money in the safe. There's only my word."

"That should suffice," declared Mary.

"Persons want more than a man's word in a case like this," said Dr. Wiley. "They want proof."

"Wait a moment; let me think," exclaimed Mary. She was silent a moment, then she asked, "When did you place the money in the safe in the vestry-room? Was it on Wednesday?"

He gave her a quick, questioning look.

"Yes. I happened to notice that the church was open at the time I was passing. It was after banking hours, and it occurred to me to go into the vestry-room and put the money in the safe instead of carrying it home with me."

"Uncle Ned saw you put the money in the safe," declared Mary.

"He did?" exclaimed Dr. Wiley, eagerly. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," she replied. "He spoke of it that same night when he was sitting on the table at supper. He was cleaning the church, and was standing in the hallway between the auditorium and the vestry-room when you came in at the side door and went into the vestry-room. He said that he saw you unlock the safe, take a large roll of bills from your pocket, and place them in the safe, after which you locked the safe and went away. I did not pay much attention to what Uncle Ned said at the time, but now, it comes back to me very vividly. Harmer was present at the time and heard what Uncle Ned said as well as myself."

Something like a sigh of relief left Dr. Wiley's lips; his grave face brightened.

"I was in a hurry and did not see Uncle Ned," he said. "I am glad he happened to be there at the time and can corroborate my assertion in regard to the money."

"I will question Uncle Ned in regard to the matter as soon as I get home," declared Mary. "But I am sure I am not mistaken in any particular. This thing must be set right at once, George." She went toward the door. "I cannot bear for you to rest under such an unjust suspicion a moment longer than is necessary."

She went out quickly. Dr. Wiley stood for some moments thinking over what she had told him. Suddenly his face changed and an exclamation of horror and dismay left his lips.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Can it be possible?"

In the meanwhile, Mary hurried home, and, without taking time to remove her wraps, went into the kitchen, where Uncle Ned sat close beside the stove nursing an attack of rheumatism.

"Here is the liniment, Uncle Ned," Mary said, placing the bottle on the table.

"Thank you, young mistis."

Mary came and stood beside him.

"Uncle Ned, you remember seeing Dr. Wiley put a roll of notes in the safe in the vestry-room over in the church last Wednesday morning, do you not?" she asked. "You know you mentioned it to Harmer and me that same night."

"Ya'as, Miss Mary, I 'members," replied Uncle Ned. "Dat war de money what Marse Harmer done sent 'way to he he'dens in Afriky."

Mary started. It was a moment or so before she could sufficiently control herself to speak calmly.

"How do you know that your young master did that?" she asked.

"He done tole me so," replied Uncle Ned. "De nex' day when I went ober to de chu'ch, Marse Harmer war thar takin' de money outen de safe. I ax him what he gwine to do wid it, and he sade he war gwine to send it to de he'dens in Afriky." He looked up and Mary's white face startled him. "Why, you'se white as cotton, Miss Mary. What's de mattah, honey?"

"Nothing." Her voice had a strange sound. She turned and went out mechanically.

Uncle Ned shook his head sadly. "Po' Miss Mary!" he murmured. "She's breakin' her heart ober Marse Harmer's doin's. I wonder why she looked so quar ober his sendin' dat money to de he'dens?"

Mary went slowly upstairs to her room; her limbs felt as though they were weighted with lead. She removed her hat and wrap, and then went and stood by the window, gazing out with unseeing eyes. She stood there for some time thinking.

Downstairs in the study the young minister sat writing his sermon for the coming Sunday, a bored look on his face. He looked up as the door opened and Mary entered. She came up to the writing table and stood looking down upon him.

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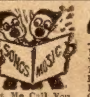

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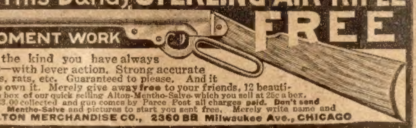

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you stole from the safe in the vestry-room?" she asked.

Harmer drew a sharp breath, the pen fell from his nerveless fingers, making a black trail across the white sheet on which were the opening words of his sermon.

"What do you mean?" he asked hoarsely.

"You know what I mean," she replied. "It is useless for you to pretend ignorance. You took five hundred dollars from the safe in the vestry-room. You learned of its being there through Uncle Ned. Give me that money."

He broke into a harsh, discordant laugh.

"I can't give it to you," he replied. "I haven't it. It's gone to pay gambling debts."

"So you are a gambler as well as a drunkard?"

He nodded. "Yes."

"Are you aware that George Wiley is under suspicion of having appropriated that money?"

Harmer lifted his brows.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, but he shall not remain under suspicion a day longer," she declared. "He shall be exonerated."

"How is it to be done?"

"I shall do it."

"You?"

"I shall go to every member of the Missionary Society and tell him the truth, the whole truth."

He looked at her curiously. "Have you taken into consideration what that will mean for me?" he asked.

"Yes, I know what it will mean for you, but that shall not deter me. I have to choose between shielding you and allowing the man I love to remain under suspicion of theft. My choice is made. I shall exonerate George Wiley."

She turned to go out. He made no attempt to detain her. As the door closed upon her, he looked down upon the sheet with the opening sentences of his sermon and the black trail across its whiteness, and a strange smile crept about his lips.

"The farce is ended," he murmured.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A GOOD HATER.

TWENTY-ONE years from the day John Steele paid the penalty of his crime on the gallows, David Steele was seated on the doorstep of a two-room log house in a mining town in Virginia. Seated on the step beside him was a man about forty-two years of age, with a handsome refined face which showed, however, the marks of dissipation. The man was known as James Jones, though few believed that it was his real name. Jones was a cultured, educated man, but a gambler and at times a hard drinker.

James Jones and David Steele had struck up a sort of friendship, though it would have been difficult to determine where the congeniality was. No two men could have been more unlike. David Steele was a rough mountaineer who could hardly sign his own name. He neither drank nor gambled. He was a reticent, moody man, almost morose in manner. He was hard-working, and was said to have been very lucky. It was generally believed that he had accumulated a large sum of money.

The two men had been silent for some little time. There was a look of deep gloom on the face of David Steele. Every anniversary of his brother's death brought back vividly the agony of that dreadful day. He had buried his brother in the yard of their mountain home. He and several of the mountain clan had gone to Wakefield and got the body of the man who had been hanged. They brought it to the house on the mountainside. David spent the night alone in the room with his brother's body. At sunrise the next morning they buried John Steele. The mountaineer had been game to the last; he had gone to his death on the gallows unflinchingly.

David had a white headstone placed at the grave. On it was name of the man who lay beneath and the words, "I Shall Not Forget." The full meaning of those words no one knew but the brother of the dead man.

The lonely grave on the mountain side of the man hanged for murder became in time a terror to the mountaineers, who never went by it if they could possibly avoid doing so. The Steele place acquired the reputation of being haunted. David Steele disappeared the day after his brother was buried, and none of his former friends or associates knew what had become of him.

The hanging of John Steele had had a salutary effect. It had practically put an end to moonshining and lawlessness among the mountaineers who had been shown at last effectually that they could not break the laws and remain unpunished.

After the silence between David Steele and James Jones had lasted for some little time, the latter remarked carelessly:

"The Governor will be here today."

The remark effectually aroused David Steele. He started and turned quickly toward James Jones.

"Do you mean Vincent, the Governor of Virginia?" he asked.

Jones nodded.

"Yes; he is traveling in his private car. He is on a tour of inspection of mines. It has something to do with a bill he wants to put through." He glanced a little curiously at David. "You seemed interested," he remarked.

A peculiar look flashed across David's face.

"I am sorter interested," he replied. He turned his head, looking straight before him. "We don't have a visit every day from the Governor of Virginia," he added, but the look in his eyes contrasted oddly with the careless words. A fierce light burned in them.

"I always admired Vincent," declared Jones. "He's a great man in his way."

"A hard man, some people thinks him," said David.

"Oh, I don't know about that," exclaimed James. "Vincent is a just man, that is why he is regarded by many as a hard man. He is honest and incorruptible. No public man has a cleaner record. The town will give him a rousing welcome. I believe he is scheduled to arrive at about three o'clock."

"Is his family with him?" asked David.

"I think so, his wife and son. He has only one child, a son about twenty years of age. I suppose you will go to the station to assist in welcoming the Governor, Steele?"

"Yes, I reckon I'll be thar."

There was something in the way the man spoke which caused Jones to regard him rather attentively.

"Have you a grievance, a grudge against Governor Vincent, Dave?" he asked, after a moment.

"A grudge ag'in' Governor Vincent?" said Steele, slowly. "What makes you think that?"

Jones shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I can't just explain why," he replied. "There was something in your manner, in your way of speaking of him, that gave me that impression."

David was silent. He sat staring straight before him with somber, brooding eyes. Jones was not particularly interested in any possible grievance or prejudice David might have against the Governor, and left him to his thoughts. He lighted a cigarette and lapsed into silence.

A woman and a girl, between fifteen and sixteen years of age, came along the street. The woman was a painted, degraded-looking creature, arrayed in tawdry finery. The girl was wonderfully pretty, with hair that glittered like spun gold in the sunlight, skin like a rare bit of Dresden china, a rosy, babyish mouth, shaped like a Cupid's bow, large, deep blue eyes heavily fringed with black lashes. She was fairylike in figure, and every movement was instinct with grace. She wore a soiled white gown, trimmed with cheap lace, a red cloak, and a red hat.

The girl was so lovely that the sight of her aroused David from his gloomy abstraction. He looked at her with half-wondering admiration.

"Beautiful child, isn't she?" remarked Jones.

Dave nodded.

"Where did Mag Macks get her?" he asked.

Jones gave a slight shrug of the shoulder.

"The girl is her daughter," he replied. "She's been traveling with some third-rate show, I have heard. Mag Macks has brought her here to sing and dance in the Dance Hall."

"She don't favor Mag none," declared David, looking reflectively after the woman and girl.

"Not at present," said Jones. "But she may look like Mag one of these days. I have no doubt Mag was as fresh, as pretty, and as innocent-looking as her daughter before she started on the downward path. The girl is bound to follow in her mother's footsteps. How can she help herself? Women like Mag Macks are vampires. They suck the heart's blood of their own flesh and blood. The girl is lovely. It's a pity!"

He spoke with a touch of regret. The girl's blue, dark-fringed eyes, reminded him of another pair of eyes, blue, dark-fringed, that had so often looked into his tenderly, trustingly—the eyes of a woman who had loved him and whom he had betrayed.

He shook off the memory and arose to his feet.

"If we want to be at the station when the Governor arrives, we had better be starting," he said to David.

David arose and the two men walked down the street together. Upon reaching the rough station, they found a crowd of miners, the shopkeepers, saloonkeepers, proprietors of gambling dens and dance halls, and the riffraff of humanity that go to make up the population of a mining town.

The private car of Governor Vincent had just pulled in at the station. The crowd sent up a mighty shout, then another and another. After a moment or so, Governor Vincent, accompanied by his wife, a beautiful auburn-haired woman, and his handsome young son, came out on the platform of the car.

Jones, standing close to David, heard him draw a sharp breath, then heard his breath come laboredly, pantingly. He half turned and looked at him. David was bending slightly forward, his eyes fixed upon the group on the platform of the car. Jones stared at him wonder-

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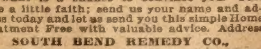
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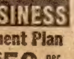
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ingly. In Steele's eyes there was a look of intense, concentrated hatred.

Jones watched him a moment and then slightly lifted his brows.

"The fellow is a good hater," he said to himself. "I wonder why he does hate Governor Vincent."

The crowd cheered lustily. The Governor lifted his hat, his wife bowed and smiled, young Vincent waved his cap, and then the three retired.

The crowd began to disperse. Jones turned to look for David and found him gone.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE PLOT.

THAT evening Jones strolled into the Dance Hall. David Steele was seated near the door. Jones dropped into a seat beside him. David acknowledged his presence by a nod, but he did not turn nor speak.

The young woman, seated at the piano, who played the accompaniments for the singers and the dance music for the dancers, started a ragtime.

The dingy curtains at the back of the stage parted, and Mag Macks' daughter came lightly forward. She wore a pink gown, reaching to her knees, pink stockings and slippers, and a wreath of pink roses on her glittering hair. Her dimpled shoulders and slim, white arms were bare. She was accorded a vociferous welcome. She began to sing. Her voice was sweet, penetrating, untrained.

At that moment the Governor's son, Harry Vincent, entered the hall and seated himself just opposite Jones and David. His handsome, boyish face flushed, his dark eyes glowed, as he looked at the girl on the stage. It was evident that her glittering, pink-and-white loveliness had enraptured him at the first glance. He leaned forward, watching her, completely enthralled, oblivious to everything else about him.

Jones watched him amusedly a moment, then turned to David and remarked:

"Mag Macks' pretty, blonde daughter has completely bewitched the Governor's son."

David, who had not noticed the entrance of young Vincent, started and turned. He glanced from the passionately admiring, absorbed face of the boy to the girl on the stage and then back again, and drew a tense breath. Then he sat watching young Vincent, an odd look on his face.

The girl finished her song and ran lightly off the stage. There was tumultuous applause in which the Governor's son joined enthusiastically. The girl returned and sang a catchy song with a dancing chorus. She danced with exquisite grace, and young Vincent's rapture of admiration grew more pronounced. David's eyes never once wandered from his face. Jones was watching the girl, fascinated by her beauty and her grace.

She finished her song and retired, refusing to respond to the encore. Young Vincent, evidently much disappointed, arose and left the hall.

David relaxed and sank back in his seat. During the rest of the performance he sat in deep thought, oblivious to everything going on about him. He and Jones left the hall together and walked down the street. The latter stopped in the red light over the door of a saloon.

"Come in and have a drink," he said.

David shook his head. "You let the drink alone," he exclaimed, "and come along with me. I've got something I want to say to you, and I want you to have a clear head."

Jones stood irresolute, his eyes fixed hungrily on the swinging door under the lurid red light. David laid his hand on his arm.

"Come with me," he repeated masterfully, and Jones yielded with an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

There was silence between the two men until they reached David's house. David lighted a lamp on the mantel, while Jones dropped down into the most comfortable chair the roughly furnished room afforded. David, after he had lighted the lamp, came and sat down near him.

"You asked me if I had a grudge ag'in' Governor Vincent," he began abruptly. "Yes, I have got a grudge ag'in' him. I hate him, but I hate his wife mo'n I do

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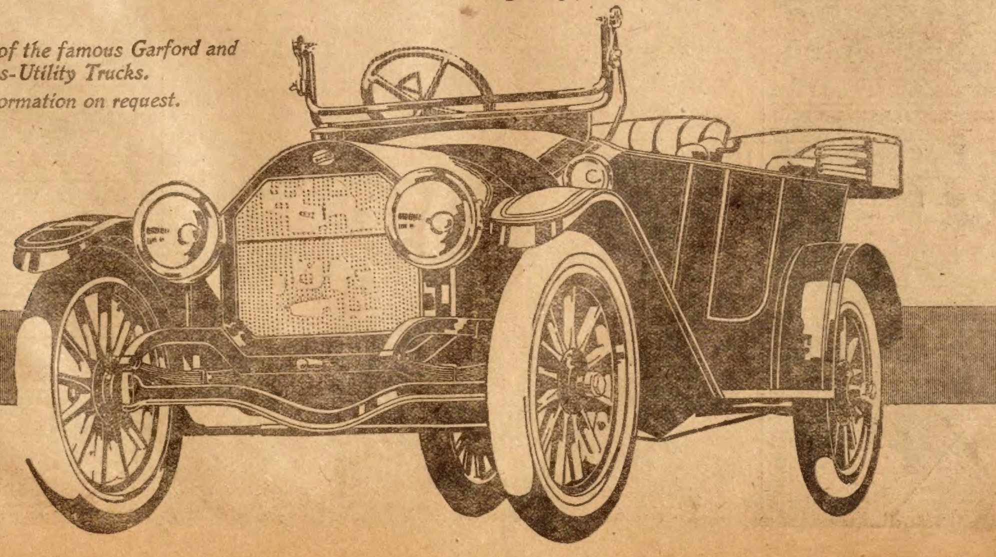

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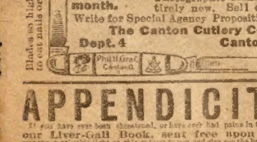
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him. I am a-goin' to tell you why."

Jones listened with interest while David went on to tell of the crime committed by John Steele, his brother, of his betrayal by Helen Rhodes, his trial, conviction, and death on the gallows. The listener was quite of the opinion that John Steele had only got what he richly deserved, but he kept his opinion to himself. He knew that David must have some motive in telling him the tragedy that had darkened his life, and he was curious to learn what it was.

"I have waited twenty-one years to be avenged," declared David. "And now I see a way. It all came to me tonight, as I watched Governor Vincent's son thar in the Dance Hall. You seen how desperate taken he war with Mag Macks' daughter." Jones nodded. "Well, I reckon on havin' him marry her."

Jones stared, then he laughed.

"That would be a neat revenge, I admit," he declared. "But I am curious to learn how you propose to bring about a marriage between the son of the Governor of Virginia and the daughter of a degraded woman of the streets."

"I'll tell you," said David. "I've done got it all planned out. The fust thing is to get possession of the gal. Thar won't be no trouble 'bout that, I reckon. I'll offer to buy her. I'll pay Mag Macks five thousand dollars to give up all rights and claim to the gal."

"She'll do it," declared Jones. "If she possessed such a thing as a soul, Mag Macks would sell it for far less."

"As soon as I have the gal," continued David, "I'll send her for about three years to one of them thar high-toned boarding-schools," and he went on to explain his plan.

"It might work out all right," Jones said, when he had finished. "But it will require quite a great deal of money."

"Thar ain't no trouble 'bout that," David declared. "I've got the money. I'll 'low you fifty dollars a month during the three years the gal's at school, on condition that you cut out the drink. And on the day the gal is married to young Vincent, I'll pay you fifteen thousand dollars down. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," replied Jones, "it is a bargain. It will not be easy to cut out the drink, but I will do it."

"You'll have to do it, or——"

"Or I shall not be able to play my part," supplemented Jones, with a smile that had a touch of irony. "Gentlemen of wealth and position, however, have been known to drink more than was good for them."

David frowned.

"I don't deny that, but this here game takes a clear head. You can do what you please afterwards."

"You are right, I must keep a clear head," acquiesced Jones. "Well, I will do it. The price is worth it. I suppose I must play the rich and devoted papa during the time the girl is at school?"

"Yes, she must believe that you are really her father."

"I wonder who is her father?" said Jones, musingly. "The girl has a thoroughbred look, as though she might have good blood." David's face darkened. "Oh, you need not let that possibility worry you," declared Jones, with an amused smile. "The fact that she is Mag Macks' child is all sufficient for your purpose. I would never have believed, Steele, that you were subtle enough to originate such a plot."

"I don't know what you mean by subtle," said David, a little sullenly. "'Tain't noways wonderful to hit on some way when a man's been thinkin' and thinkin' fo' twenty-one years. Thar's one thing that's worryin' me some. Do you think that young Vincent will recognize the girl?"

Jones shook his head.

"No," he replied. "He will see a resemblance, of course, if he remembers the girl of the Dance Hall. But he would never think of associating her with a girl in his own sphere. But if she is lovely as she is now, the charm will work all right.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

### BOUGHT.

JAMES JONES had been right in his estimate of Mag Macks. The woman of the streets was not only willing, but eager, to sell her own flesh and blood, her beautiful young daughter, for five thousand dollars. She made no demur when David told her that she must relinquish all claim to the girl, and never make any attempt to see her.

David, absorbed as he was in his cruel purpose, fiercely intolerant of anything that might stand in the way, felt, nevertheless, a thrill of disgust as he bargained with the mother for the possession of her daughter. The leering smile on the woman's lips when he explained that he intended to educate the girl brought the blood to his cheek, rough man though he was.

Jones suppressed an amused smile when David related what had taken place between him and Mag Macks.

"Did you never care for a woman, David?" he asked, a little curiously.

David shook his head.

"No," he replied. "I ain't got no faith in 'em, and I'd have to trust a woman befo' I could love her."

"You could find plenty of women worthy a man's love and trust," declared Jones, gravely. "It is usually the woman who suffers through a man's treachery."

The lovely young daughter of Mag Macks appeared no more at the Dance Hall, much to the regret of its patrons. As Mag Macks disappeared about the same time, it was generally believed that she had taken the girl with her.

The girl was placed by Jones in a fashionable Northern boarding-school. David had decided that it was best to tell the girl at once that she was Jones' daughter.

"You oughter have a mo' 'ristocratic name than Jones," said David, when they were discussing the matter.

"You are quite right about that," Jones readily admitted. He thought a moment. "How would Harmer Stanley answer?" he asked.

"All right," replied David. "That sounds mighty 'ristocratic."

A peculiar smile passed over Jones' lips. "Very well," he said. "From this day forth I am no longer James Jones; I am Harmer Stanley."

"Mag Macks told me that Pearl was only a stage name," David explained, "that the gal's real name is Florence."

A curious look flashed across Stanley's face. "Florence," he repeated, half to himself. "Florence Stanley."

"It sound good," declared David, approvingly.

Stanley did not seem to hear him. He sat with a faraway look in his eyes, buried in thought. David glanced at him rather curiously. There were times when he felt some curiosity as to the past life of James Jones. But he soon dismissed the matter from his mind. Jones was just the man for his purpose; he was willing to lend himself to that purpose and that was all David cared about. The man's past did not concern him.

### CHAPTER XIX.

### "SHE IS GOOD AND INNOCENT."

MRS. VINCENT looked up with tender eyes as her son came into the drawingroom car where she was seated.

"Where have you been, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, strolling about the town," replied Harry Vincent, coming and seating himself beside her.

"I suppose these mining towns are pretty much alike," said Mrs. Vincent. "That is the way they seem to me."

"Yes." The young fellow spoke abstractedly. His mother glanced at him inquiringly. She knew every expression of the handsome boyish face so inexpressibly dear to her. But there was a look upon it now which baffled her, that was new to her.

Harry turned to her suddenly.

"I have seen tonight, mother, the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life," he exclaimed.

Mrs. Vincent smiled indulgently. "A miner's daughter?" she queried.

He shook his head. "No, she's a song and dance girl. I saw her in the Dance Hall here." Mrs. Vincent slightly lifted her brows. "She's all right, mother," the boy declared passionately. "She has a face like an angel. I am sure she's as good and innocent as she looks."

"Perhaps," murmured Mrs. Vincent, somewhat skeptically. "Though good and innocent girls are not usually found in such places, Harry."

The boy flushed and a little cloud crept into his eyes, dark and velvety like his mother's.

"But I hope the girl is all that you believe her," added Mrs. Vincent.

Later she told her husband about Harry's admiration for the song and dance girl.

Governor Vincent laughed.

"He's just at a susceptible age," he declared.

"I have never thought Harry particularly susceptible," said Mrs. Vincent, thoughtfully. "I never heard him speak in the same way of any girl before."

"Why, my dear, you surely do not attribute any importance to it?" queried the Governor. "Impressions of that nature are fleeting with a boy of Harry's age. He'll have forgotten the girl by tomorrow."

"I suppose I am foolish to give the matter a thought," Mrs. Vincent admitted. "To tell you the truth, Henry, I believe I am somewhat nervous, and little things have a tendency to worry me."

"What has made you nervous, dear?"

"In the crowd at the station yesterday, Henry, I saw a face that looked very much like the face of David Steele."

"David Steele?" exclaimed the Governor. "Would you know him after all these years?"

"Yes," she replied unhesitatingly. "His face is indelibly imprinted on my mind. Of course, the face I saw in the crowd has grown older, but there was the same look of menacing hatred upon it that there was that day when he came to the schoolhouse. The face I saw today seemed to stand out from all the other faces, dark, menacing, revengeful. I have not been able to get it out of my mind."

"Admitting that the fellow you saw was David Steele, you have nothing to fear from him, Helen," declared the Governor, reassuringly.

"I am not so sure of that," she replied thoughtfully. "You know he told me he could wait years to be avenged. He

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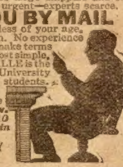

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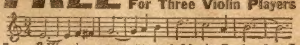

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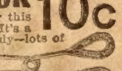

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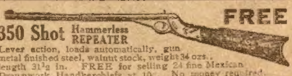

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[illegible] through you or Harry, [illegible] she shuddered and grew [illegible]

"[illegible], my love!" exclaimed Governor Vincent. "Steele's threats were only blowout. He thought he could frighten you because you're a woman. It is possible, of course, that you did see Steele today. I have never heard what become of the fellow. But there is no reason in the world for you to become upset over it."

"It was the look on his face that frightened me, Henry."

Governor Vincent shrugged his shoulders.

"He was feeling savage at the time, no doubt. I do not question his hatred and his vindictiveness. But I do not take any stock in his threats. Now, put him out of your mind, dear," and he began to talk of something else.

Upon the following morning, Mrs. Vincent and her son were seated in the dining car at breakfast. The Governor had breakfasted early and gone with a committee on an inspection of the mines.

Harry Vincent suddenly sprang up from the table and went to the window.

"There is the girl I was telling you about, mother," he cried, almost breathlessly. "Come and see her."

Mrs. Vincent, with a slight contraction of her brows, arose and came to the window.

A woman and a girl were walking along the track. The girl was gazing straight before her, and Mrs. Vincent did not see her face. But the woman was staring curiously at the car, and both Mrs. Vincent and her son had a full view of her painted, depraved face. The boy flushed deeply. On Mrs. Vincent's face there was an expression of disgust. She turned and went back to the table.

Harry followed her. "I beg your pardon, mother," he said

Mrs. Vincent smiled. "Never mind, dear," she replied. "You thought the girl was decent."

"I still believe it, mother," said the boy, quietly.

She looked at him in astonishment. "What, after seeing her with a creature like that, Harry?" she exclaimed, incredulously.

"Yes, mother."

She gazed at him wonderingly. "The girl must have bewitched you. Surely you must know what sort of a woman she was with?"

He inclined his head. "The woman is her mother."

Mrs. Vincent gave a slight shudder. "Poor girl!" she exclaimed pityingly

Harry turned, walked to the window, and stood looking out. Mrs. Vincent continued eating her breakfast, but Harry did not return to the table.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE DAUGHTER OF MAG MACKS.

"THAT there's the Governor's private car," said Mag Macks to her daughter, as they passed along the track. "I heard that his son was at the hall last night and seemed powerful taken with you."

"I saw him," murmured the girl, a soft light in her beautiful eyes. "He's awful handsome."

Mag glanced at her sharply out of the corner of her eye.

"You seem kinder took with him," she said, with a suggestive laugh.

The light died out of the girl's eyes

"I think he's handsome," she repeated coldly. "Anybody can see that!"

"If you wasn't such a little fool, you'd have encouraged him," declared Mag Macks, disgustedly. "The sooner you git rid of them prudish notions of your'n, the better."

The wild-rose tint on the girl's cheek deepened to crimson, her flowerlike lips tightened, but she said nothing. They parted at the next corner, the girl going to the Dance Hall to practice for the next performance. Mag, after stopping at a saloon for a morning bracer, returned to their squalid lodging where she found David Steele awaiting her.

After David had departed, Mag Macks went to the proprietor of the Dance Hall and canceled her daughter's engagement, much to his indignation, for the girl had proved a great attraction. He blustered a great deal, but Mag was unmoved, and carried off the girl in triumph. She did not afford any explanation until they had reached the lodging-house. She then told the girl that a rich man had taken a fancy to her and was going to adopt her.

The girl gazed at her breathlessly, her face aglow.

"Oh, is it really true?" she cried

Mag nodded.

"It's true, all right," she replied. "I've given up all claim to you." She did not think it necessary to say anything about the five thousand dollars that had been paid to her. "He's goin' to have you eddicated and make a fine lady of you."

"Oh!" murmured the girl, rapturously.

Mag glanced at her radiant face and gave a short laugh. The girl flushed and looked abashed.

"It's—very good of you, mother, to let me go," she said falteringly.

"The partin' ain't grievin' you particklar," declared Mag, sneeringly. The girl hung her head in silence. "You're a lovin' daughter, you be!" Mag went on, with a strange, mocking light in her eyes.

The girl lifted her beautiful [illegible] and looked at her [illegible]. The woman, hardened as she was, moved uneasily under the look in the blue eyes, a [illegible] look of pity, reproach, sadness.

Mag Macks turned away abruptly, went to a cupboard from which she took a bottle and a glass.

"Don't, mother!" pleaded the girl.

The woman took no notice. She poured the glass half full of whisky and drank it neat.

"How can you think it strange that I do not care for you as a daughter should care for a mother?" asked the girl.

The woman laughed.

"Mabbe I thinks it strange and mabbe I don't," she replied. "You go git your duds packed. You'll be leavin' in the morning."

The girl dropped her eyes to hide the joy in them, and turned to leave the room. The liquor had mounted to the woman's head. She staggered to a chair and sank into it heavily.

"Five thousand dollars!" she muttered, with a drunken chuckle. "What's that the Bible says 'bout 'castin' your bread on the waters' and it'll come back to ye? I am bein' rewarded now for——" she stopped suddenly with a quick glance about the room. Then broke into a maudlin laugh. "Mum's the word, Mag, mum's the word!"

In the little closet of a room where she slept, the girl stood the light of a great joy on her exquisite face.

"Perhaps some day in the new life that is beginning for me I shall meet him," she murmured softly

She was thinking of the Governor's son, the handsome boy who had watched her with such passionate admiration. She had noticed him at once. He had looked like a fairy prince to her in the rough audience. And she had sung and danced for him as she never had before, thrilled and inspired by the look in a boy's handsome eyes.

Instead of setting to work to get together her shabby clothes, the daughter of Mag Macks stood dreaming of the son of the Governor of Virginia.

In the private parlor of their suite in a Northern hotel, Stanley, as previously agreed upon by David and himself, told the daughter of Mag Macks that he was her father, and that her real name was Florence Stanley. He told her in a cold, matter-of-fact way, for he did not wish to win any affection from the girl, nor to become fond of her. He wished to carry out his part of the bargain coldly, dispassionately, unfettered by sentiment.

"And is Mag Macks my mother [illegible]" asked the girl, looking up at him, and waiting almost breathlessly for his reply

And as he looked down into the blue, dark-fringed [illegible] a strange feeling swept over Stanley—pity, tenderness, [illegible] volt.

"No," he replied, almost without any volition of his own. "She is not your mother."

The girl's face lighted with a great joy. "Oh, I am glad, so glad!" she cried.

"I cannot tell you any more," said Stanley. He did not regret the [illegible] on which he had acted, but it was necessary to handle the situation [illegible]. "You must not ask me any questions."

"I won't," declared the girl

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* * *

## A Prince Fined.

We are rapidly revising our ideas of the European aristocracy. There was a time when we supposed that the lords and princes of the Old World were chartered libertines, with a special prerogative to swagger through the land and insult whomsoever they pleased, just like an American policeman.

We thought that they had powers to pass laws just like our own suffragettes, and that common people had to cringe before them, just as we cringe to a waiter or a sleeping-car porter

But either we have been mistaken, or the European is stiffening his back. It seems that the European aristocrat must not only obey the law, but he must smile and look pleasant over it

For example, take the case of Prince Charles of Wrede, who is not only a prince, but a captain of the German cavalry, and captains of German cavalry are comparable only with our West Point graduates in the unshakable conviction that the earth and the fullness thereof belong to them.

It seems that the Prince had occasion to telephone, and his temper was so far ruffled by one of the [illegible] who presided over the Ansbach exchange that he described that institution as a hogpen, and expressed the belief that the attendant sprites were reading novels instead of attending to their official duties.

Now the Prince ought not to have used the word "hogpen." We ourselves have had our little difficulties with telephone operators [illegible], but we never used language of [illegible] kind. [illegible] used no language at all

We intended to, but lacked the opportunity There is no satisfaction in stating precise opinions into a telephone receiver when you know that the lady at the other end has "hung up," so we had to take it out on the office boy and subsequently on the domestic circle.

But to return to the Prince of Wrede. You would hardly believe it, but he was prosecuted for being rude to a telephone girl. He was charged with beamtenbeleidigung, or words to that effect, which seems a very terrible thing to be charged with. And he was fined seven dollars.

His plea that the service was execrably bad did not avail him in the least. The court admitted that the service was bad. The court said that there were no words in the language that could describe its badness. But that was not even a mitigating circumstance.

Princes and cavalry captains must not be rude to telephone girls. It was a distinct case of beamtenbeledigung, and as soon as the court had extracted that word from its system it imposed the aforesaid fine and adjourned.

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"Vat?" said the son.

"Did you count dem geese again, Heiny?"

"[illegible]."

"How many vas dey, Heiny?"

"Vun."

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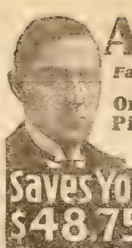

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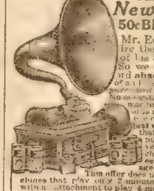

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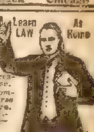

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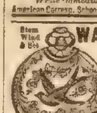

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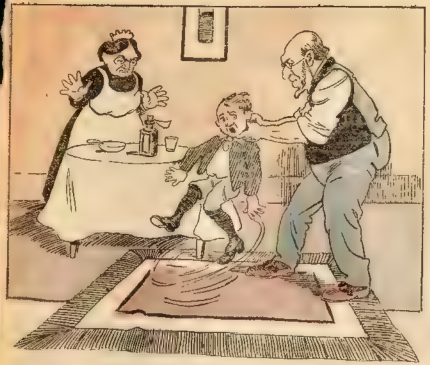


Grandmother—"Josiah! whatever are you doin' with the boy?"
Grandfather—"He's gone and took his medicine without shakin' the bottle, so I'm shakin' it for him now."

### No Need to Worry.

The late Thomas B. Jeffrey, who built bicycles and automobiles, was a man of few words. One day he was on a railroad train when a traveling acquaintance called his attention to a big building in a town by which the train was passing.

"See that warehouse?" said the traveler. "Well, ten years ago I could have bought that whole thing for seven thousand dollars and now it's worth twenty."

"Did you have the seven thousand?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, then," said Jeffrey, "I wouldn't [illegible]"

### The Vigorous Minister.

A theological student was sent one Sunday to supply a vacant pulpit in a Connecticut Valley town. A few days after, he received a copy of the weekly paper of that place, with the following item marked:

"The Reverend —— of the senior class of Yale Seminary, supplied the pulpit at the Congregational Church last Sunday, and the church will now be closed three weeks for repairs."

### The Consumer's Irony.

The attorney for the gas company was making a popular address.

"Think of the good the gas company has done!" he cried. "If I were permitted a pun, I would say, in the words of the immortal poet, 'Honor the Light Brigade.'"

Voice of a consumer from the audience—"Oh, what a charge they made!"

### Would Help Some.

The power to see quickly and to seize every opportunity and advantage, large and small alike, is the quality that above all others insures success.

Mr. Carnegie tells about a little Scotch boy who had this quality of astuteness highly developed. The boy's grandmother was packing lunch for him to take to school one morning. Suddenly, looking up in the old lady's face, he said: "Grandmother, does yer specs magnify?"

"A little, my child," she answered.

"Aweel, then," said the boy, "I wad just like it if ye wad tak' them off when yer packin' my lunch."

### Turn About.

He came in and laid down some suspicious-looking bills, with a genuine dollar bill on top.

"I want to pay for that barrel of potatoes I got."

"Can't take this money," said the dealer.

"Why not?"

"Most of it isn't good."

"The top layer is good is it not?"

"Yes."

"That's the way it was with the potatoes."

### Puzzled Him.

A farmer who went to a large city to see the sights engaged a room at a hotel and before retiring asked the clerk about the hours for dining.

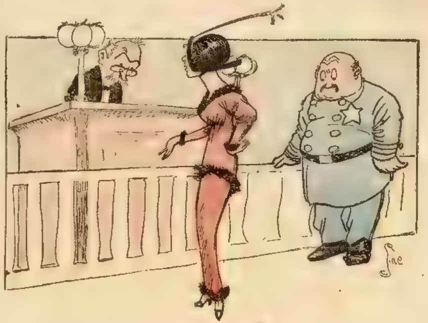
"We have breakfast from 6 to 11, dinner from 11 to 3 and supper from 3 to 8," explained the clerk.

"Wa-al, say," inquired the farmer in surprise, "what time air I goin' ter git ter see the town?"

### Instructions.

Willie (ready for school)—"Mamma, they are hoisting up a safe down the street."

Mother—"Well, be careful and not walk on the safe side."



Judge—"You are charged with shoplifting."
[illegible] your honor, I ask you—would it be possible for a lady to commit shoplifting in this skirt?"

### A Father's Sarcasm.

"I don't think your father feels very kindly toward me," said Mr. Staylate.

"You misjudge him. The morning after you called on me, he seemed quite worried for fear I had not treated you with proper courtesy."

"Indeed! What did he say?"

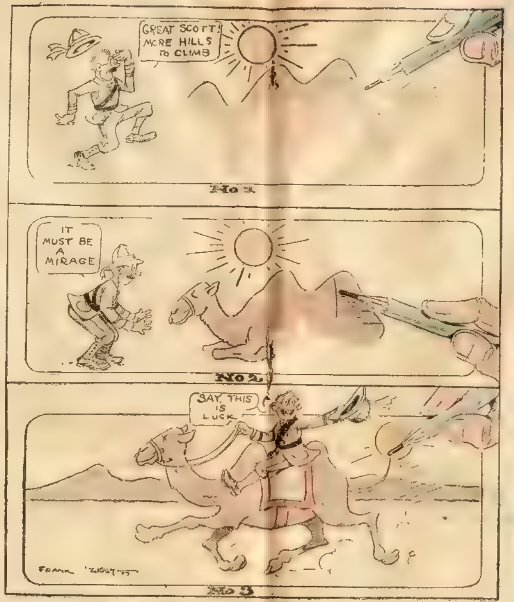
"He asked me how I could be so rude as to let you go away without your breakfast."

### Wanted—a Silkworm.

Old Gent—"Gentle disposition! Why, he wants to bite the head off every dog he meets. You've swindled me!"

Fancier—"Lor' luv yer, guv'nor, you didn't oughter keep dogs at all! A gent with your temperament ought only to go in for silkworms!"

## ARTIST FOOLINGS



GREAT SCOTT! MORE HILLS TO CLIMB
No 1
IT MUST BE A MIRAGE
No 2
SAY, THIS IS LUCK
FRANK
No 3

### Why He Preferred Venice.

A young lady who had returned from a tour through Italy with her father, remarked that her father had liked all the Italian cities, but especially he liked Venice.

"Ah, Venice, to be sure," said the friend to whom she was relating some of the adventures of their trip. "I can readily understand that your father would prefer Venice, with its gondolas and St. Mark's and Michael Angelos ——"

"Oh no," said the young lady, "It wasn't that. But he could sit in the hotel, you know, and fish out of the window."

### Why Patsy Was Licked.

Katie—"Well, youse a sight. I t'ought you said you could lick Mickey standin' on yer head an' wit' bote yer hands tied behind yer back."

Patsy—"So I could—but de slob wouldn't fight that way."—Puck.

### Awful.

"It must be terrible to have to spend your days in this place," said the lady who was visiting the penitentiary.

"Yessim," replied the lifer. "We has prunes every Sunday."

### A Misnomer.

"I understand your wife is financially interested in your business."

"Yes."

"A silent partner, I suppose?"

"Well—er—that's what she calls herself."

### A Limit to His Confidence.

The Old Man—"Young man, when you take my daughter, I trust you with the dearest treasure of my life. No, I couldn't lend you my auto for a little spin. I value it too highly to risk it in strange hands."

### How He Remembered It.

"Were you in Venice when you were abroad?"

"I forget. Were we, husband?"

"I don't see how you can forget Venice. That's where we got that delicious spaghetti."

### Waiting to Discard Him.

Maud—"I do wish Tom would hurry up and propose."

Ethel—"But I thought you didn't like him."

Maud—"I don't. I want to get rid of him."

### In Full Mourning.

Down in Georgia a negro, who had his life insured for several hundred dollars died and left the money to his widow. She immediately bought herself a very elaborate mourning outfit.

Showing her purchases to her friend, she was very particular in going into detail as to prices and all incidental particulars. Her friend was very much impressed and remarked:

"Them sho' is fine clo'es, but, befo' Heaven, what is you goin' to do wid all dis black underwear?"

The bereaved one sighed.

"[illegible] when I mourns, I mourns."

### A Future Financier.

A very nice young man was calling on his sister. To make things easy she gave him a beautiful new penny saying, "Save each penny, and soon you will have a dollar."

"I'll soon have a dollar!" replied the boy, with great eagerness.

The young man smiled good naturedly, dug into his pocket, saying: "Well, just how much more do you need?"

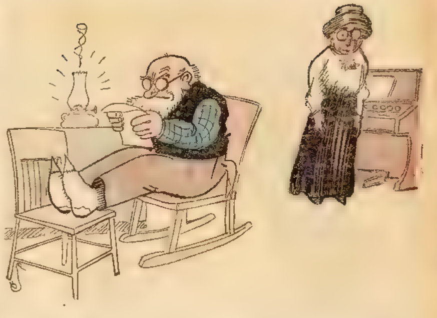
"Only 99 cents."

He soon had a dollar.—Judge.

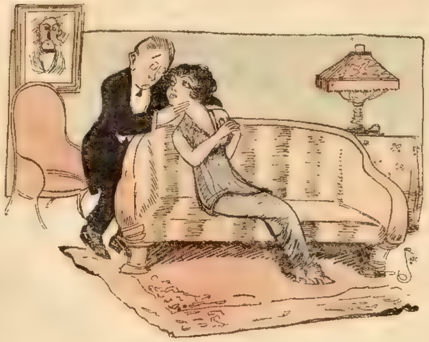
### Against His Will.

"You ought to be ashamed to spend the best part of your life in jail," said the kind old lady to the prisoner.

"Madam," replied the convict, "don't blame me for it. I assure you that I am here against my will."



Uncle Josh—"Here's a letter from nephew Henry, that's gone to Africa—says within twenty rods o' his house there's a family of laughing hyenas."
His Wife—"Well, I'm glad Henry's got pleasant neighbors, anyway—that's something."



Edgar—"If you married me don't you think your pa would take me into his office?"
Miss Winn—"No. He said you're too big for an office boy and too light for porter work."

### Cried All The Time.

"Thomas, what is the matter with your brother Johnny?" asked their mother.

"He's crying," replied Thomas, "because I'm eating my cake and won't give him any."

"Is his own cake finished?"

"Yes'm, and he cried while I was eating that, too."

### Thought He Meant Gaslight.

A girl from the country who had recently come to town to work and who was busy all day, went to a dentist one evening to have him extract a tooth which had been troubling her. She asked him what he would charge for the operation.

"Five dollars with gas, two without," was the answer.

"Oh," said the girl, "then I'll drop in tomorrow and have it out by daylight."

### A Good Excuse.

A second-grade boy in one of the Philadelphia schools came in late recently, when the following colloquy between the teacher and pupil ensued.

"Why are you late, Thomas?"

"Couldn't come no sooner."

"You should get up earlier. All the first-grade children were here on time."

"I was up in time, but I couldn't come no sooner."

"Why couldn't you come any sooner, if you were up in time?"

"I couldn't find my pants."

"That's a good excuse, Thomas. You may [illegible]"

### A Quick Retort.

An English army veteran, who had lost an arm in feudal times, was very prejudiced against the Irish in general.

One day he exhibited the wound to a party of soldiers, which suggested to an Irishman present the question: "How did you come to lose the arm, may I ask?"

"It was this way. There was a drop of Irish blood in that arm, so I cut it off myself."

"Faith, 'tis a pity it wasn't in your neck," retorted Paddy.

### Hunts His Meal.

"Where do you go for your lunch?"

"You're right."

"I don't understand you. I asked you where do you go for your lunch?"

"And I said you're right. I do go for it. I eat at one of these help-yourself places, and I go for it like a ferret goes for a rabbit."

### A Severe Case of Love Fever.

He—"Darling, why are you so sad?"

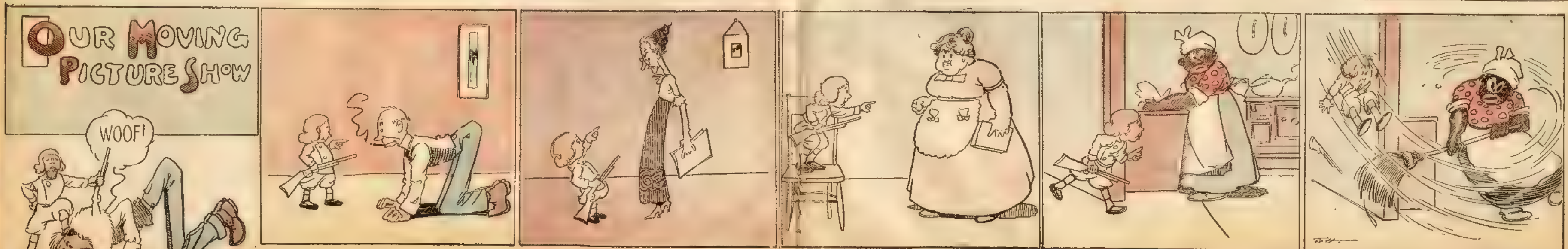
She (gulping down a sob)—"Oh, dearest, I was just thinking this will be our last evening together until tomorrow night."—Puck.

### A Change of Will.

Briggs—"I hear that old Rexleigh has made a new will."

Griggs—"Yes; his doctor advised a change of heir."

## HE GOT IN BAD



Jimmy (with his new air rifle)—"Now, I'm goin' to hunt big game. Daddy, I want you to be a lion!"
Daddy—"Sure thing, son."

Jimmy—"And, Auntie, I want you to be a giraffe."
Auntie—"What? Giraffe! Land sakes alive——!"

Jimmy—"And Cousin Jane, you are to be the elephant!"
Cousin Jane—"Good gracious, you impertinent runt! Why, I'll——"

Jimmy—"And, Belinda Ann, you stop cookin' and be the gorilla!"

Belinda Ann—"Me a gorilla! (Swipe! Bang! Woof!) Yo young imp, yo' git outen dis kitchen!"

# The Cabalistic Hand

## Or, Telltale Fingerprints – by George Ethelbert Walsh

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Begun in No. [illegible], December 27. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from the office of publication.

### CHAPTER X

"Then you've seen me [illegible] and go?"

"Not I; but my men [illegible]."

Maxine took the thin films of w[illegible] with the impressio[illegible] on them and [illegible] them to the box, motioning me to replace them in the filing [illegible].

"I think," he said quietly, "if your evidence against Parks is no stronger than that against me, you won't convict him. [illegible] is an old client of mine, and I can come and go to his house without interesting myself in his case. But if you'll call around tomorrow, Inspector, I'll tell you whether or not these fingerprints belong to this man Parks. Th[illegible] all I can say for the present."

"You're n[illegible] sure yourself, then, they belong to him?" queried the Inspector, a little nettled.

"We're absolutely sure of nothing, Inspector, not in this world. But—and he hesitated, as if debating whether or not to make this confession—"but, I'll say [illegible], Inspector, if Parks is the guilty [illegible], he's a much bigger criminal than [illegible] imagine. He's a past-master and a genius. I'm interested in the case only to the extent of finding out whether he is as shrewd and crafty as I have been led to think. Perhaps he may be th[illegible] [illegible]ter criminal we w[illegible] [illegible]"

Maxine offe[illegible] Inspector and waited for the [illegible] [illegible] comprehension [illegible] and startled surprise [illegible] face of his listener; his [illegible] husky and a trifle [illegible] [illegible]mered a reply [illegible] couldn't [illegible] him—nothin[illegible] taken y[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the sen[illegible] I'm supposing may exist. The very f[illegible] that he was so elusive would be an argument against your conclusion. [illegible] wouldn't be such a master at [illegible] [illegible]ion if he allowed himself to be caught and identified. Haven't you the imagination, Inspector, to conceive of one too big to be entrapped in the ordinary way [illegible] man who could direct and plan [illegible], but always escape the consequences of it? Such a leader would employ others to work for him, always keeping himself in the background; his agents would do the dirty, dangerous work, or, if he performed it in person, he would be too shrewd to get caught."

"His own men would squeal on him," was the Inspector's natural rejoinder to this remark.

"Perhaps they would fear this man more than they would the police—more than prison or the electric chair. He could punish them more when they were released than they would be punished in prison. Or, perhaps he would exercise such a dominating influence over them, that out of personal loyalty they would never confess. Such a leader would be very careful in selecting his agents; he would take none into his confidence except loyal followers."

Inspector McGonigle rose from his chair, and looked almost pleadingly at Maxine.

"Have you discovered anything, Mr. Maxine," he asked, "that makes you think such a criminal is in existence? Or is this just supposition? [illegible] know who Parks is? Have you a record of him?"

"I don't know Parks," bluntly replied Maxine. "You say you have arrested him for the Seldon crime, and that you can prove it. If so, Inspector, I congratulate you. If he's the trunk criminal, be careful of him, for the one who committed that crime is no ordinary man. He's a master in his profession, and he's responsible, I should say, for a long list of other crimes."

"But you suspect he's the right one?"

"Inspector," quite blandly, "if I had suspected Parks, he would have been the last person I should have placed under arrest. A suspect at large has potential possibilities that cannot be said of one in jail. When a man knows [illegible] suspected he [illegible] and if [illegible] it's doubly [illegible] have no flaws in [illegible]"

"Then you suspected him, and d[illegible] have him arrested?" was the rather doleful reply.

"I had no thought of arresting Parks," [illegible] answer.

Inspector McGonigle [illegible] him with many other questions, but Maxine sud[illegible] his [illegible]. Instead of [illegible] he merely smiled [illegible] agreeing or disagreeing in monosyllables. When McGonigle finally left the office, he was more [illegible] when he entered, but he went [illegible] confident that he had arrested a criminal of great importance. An expression of dogged determination on his face indicated that he intended to extract from Parks his secret, or die in the attempt.

"I pity Parks in his third degree ordeal," Maxine remarked, as the door closed behind the Inspector.

"You believe he's the guilty one?" I asked, feeling that I was as much in the dark as the Inspector.

"Why should Parks have been so anxious to destroy his fingertips?" replied Maxine, thoughtfully, ignoring my question.

The interest aroused by the interview with Inspector McGonigle made me forget completely the meeting we had that night with Philip Fraser, the fiance [illegible] Miss Dorothy Seldon; and I might have ignored the date entirely had not Maxine reminded me of it.

"Montague," he said, early in the evening, "were you ever in the cellar of the Seldon house?"

"I was in the basement where the trunk with the dead woman was found," I replied.

"But there's a coal cellar underneath that. You were never in it?"

"No. I never went below the basement floor."

"Then perhaps this diagram of the place will make the location clear to you. Here are the cellar stairs, leading from the basement to the coal cellar. They are cheap, wooden stairs, and I find they're quite rotten from the dampness. In fact, they have been propped up by two joists recently for fear they might collapse and cause injury to any one caught on them."

"Yes, sir," I replied, studying the diagram he had drawn for me.

"Tonight we want to investigate this cellar."

"Haven't the police been down there?" I asked. "Don't they know of the coal cellar?"

"Yes," a little testily, "I suppose they've examined every foot of the place. But that isn't the point I'm after. We're going down there tonight—Mr. Fraser, you, and I."

"Yes, sir; I understand."

"The stairs, as I said, are weak and liable to fall at any time if the props should by accident be removed."

"Yes, sir."

"There's an old disused ladder in the cellar, which workmen left there at some time. I measured it, and it fits exactly. If for any reason one should be imprisoned down there by the collapse of the stairs, the ladder would afford a ready means of escape."

I followed him, but was still too mystified to make other than a brief reply.

"You can go down first," he continued, "and lead the way. Mr. Fraser will follow, and I will bring up the rear. When I'm on the stairs you can accidentally lean against the props and dislodge them. I think in their rotten condition the stairs will then collapse under my weight."

"You might get hurt in the [illegible], Maxine," I said inanely.

"I shall be prepared for the fall and will jump in time to avoid any inj[ury]."

He was quiet for such a long time that I finally said:

"And then what shall I do?"

"That's all, Montague."

"You want me to remove the props and cause the stairs to collapse while you're on them?" I asked in wonderment.

"You have a keen mind for grasping the essential points of a case, Montague, and that's why you're such a good assistant to me. Yes, you have the directions correct. Don't fail to carry them out, and don't ask any questions."

That was all the information he would volunteer, and knowing him from past experiences, I felt it would be useless to ask for more particulars. More than once I had blindly executed queer orders for him, not knowing whither they would lead or what might result as a consequence. This working in the dark had an element of the dramatic that was not without its compensations. The very uncertainty of what might happen held a fascination for me that can readily be understood. Perhaps Maxine reasoned that too much knowledge on my part might cause me to bungle oftener than if I worked with a bare understanding of the details; and so he chose this method of securing my co-operation.

It was late in the evening when we called again at the Seldon mansion. We missed the immobile face of Parks, who before had greeted and conducted us into the hall. One of the other servants performed that ceremony, dis[illegible] [illegible]itation and nervousness. The arrest of Parks had cast a certain gloom of apprehension over the servants; [illegible] knowing who might next be [illegible] suspicion, they viewed every police officer and private detective with fear.

Apparently they did not know whom to trust; they could not tell who was a detective in disguise, or who a friend of the family. Every stranger to them was an enemy in disguise.

Maxine succeeded in identifying himself to one of the older servants, and without difficulty he was admitted to the basement. I waited in the upper hall until he returned. Before Miss Seldon appeared, Maxine was back and sitting with me in the hall chatting

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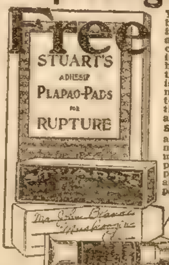

Yes, stop it, you know by your own experience it is only a make-shift, a false prop against a collapsing wall, and that it is undermining your health. Why, then, continue to wear it? Here is a better way, which means that tiresome, torturous trusses can be thrown away forever, and it's all because Stuart's PLAPAO-PADS are different, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to prevent slipping and to afford an arrangement to hold the parts securely in place.

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USED CARS—$350.00 Model [illegible]-C Waverley Chelsea, 2-passenger Coupe, used tires, battery, green upholstery and paint as it stands, in good serviceable condition.

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[illegible] of the hist[illegible] adventures [illegible] of the rare specimens of tapestry [illegible] the walls.

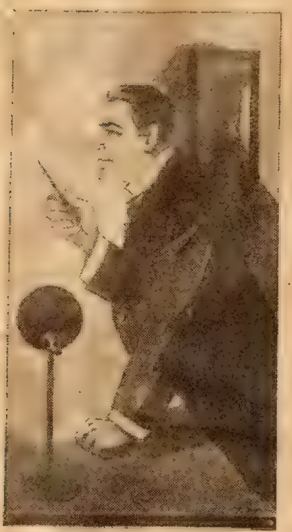
"I [illegible] just tell[illegible] Montague the history of this picture," he said easily, as an almost imperceptible noise back of us [illegible] our [illegible]. "I heard it from [illegible] father's [illegible], Miss Seldon, and it [illegible] pressed [illegible] wonder[illegible]."

Miss Seldon advanced to meet us; she w[illegible] plainly [illegible] by this visit than by the [illegible] in the morning. It was [illegible] the knowledge that we [illegible] appointment, and Mr. Fraser was [illegible] to handle her side of the [illegible]

[illegible] Mr Fraser, I suppose [illegible] calmly. "He will [illegible] mind."

[illegible]? I thought [illegible] here too early for [illegible]

[illegible] meet the other en[illegible]," she replied. "He was [illegible] sted in this—this affair



*"An intentional accident."*

[illegible] disturb[illegible] the peace of mind of [illegible]. You know they arrested Parks [illegible]"

"[illegible] I heard of it. A stupid piece of [illegible] on the part of the police!"

"[illegible] think so," she replied [illegible] know Parks had nothing [illegible] it. He's innocent, and I can [illegible] for him."

"[illegible]'s been with you some time?" asked [illegible] watching her [illegible].

"[illegible], and I know he's honest [illegible] the day is long."

"[illegible] before that you knew nothing of [illegible], I suppose."

[illegible] moment Mr. Fraser appeared [illegible]ted a reply to this question. [illegible] his mistress he was in a more [illegible] mood than earlier in the day. He [illegible]ined to take it seriously that his [illegible]ation as an amateur detective [illegible]ired.

"[illegible]ourse," he said with a smile. "[illegible] up to all the tricks of you pro[illegible]ls, but I keep my eyes and ears [illegible] and I can put two and two to[illegible]. Now, these police and newspa[illegible] [illegible]tives make me tired. They're always prying around, suspecting everybody, and watching for something that they think may happen. They twist and distort everything you say, and suspect you if you happen to hesitate or look confused when they ply you with questions. Yes, they make me tired."

"They do more than that; they disgust me at times," Maxine replied. "Yes, I quite agree with you, Mr. Fraser."

A flush of pleasure showed that the compliment had gone home, and Mr. Philip Fraser became as affable as if we had been representatives of royalty visiting him.

"Now, what shall we do first?" he finally inquired

"I want you to go with me to the coal cellar," Maxine said impressively. "There are some things that the police have overlooked."

"In the coal cellar!" exclaimed Miss Seldon. "Oh, I couldn't go down in that dirty place, and I did so wish to accompany you and see what Philip could do to help [illegible]."

"N[illegible], Miss Seldon, I don't think it would be a very pleasant place for you," replied Maxine, gravely. "But we will report to you, or rather, Mr Fraser will tell you all that we do [illegible]."

"I suppose I must be satisfied with that," she replied, frowning a little in her annoyance and disappointment

"We won't be gone long, Dot," said Mr. Fraser, taking her hand. "I'll come directly to you [illegible] through."

"We must hurry," Maxine interrupted. "Suppose you lead the way, Montague. You are acquainted with the place."

Taking the cue, I got up and walked toward the basement stairs; once down them I made straight for the door that opened into the sub-cellar. Maxine's diagram had been so well drawn that I could find the trapdoor without difficulty. I raised it and peered into the murky blackness of the pit below.

"Montague, you descend and light the gas," Maxine said, and we will follow."

As I put a foot on the stairs, I tested them and found they were all Maxine had described: they were rotten and rickety from old age. Once at the bottom I struck a match, but before searching for the gas jet I made sure of the position of the wooden beams used to prop up the stairs. Then I turned on the gas and lighted it.

"You go down next, Mr. Fraser, and I will follow," I heard Maxine say in the room above.

Philip Fraser, immaculately dressed and not accustomed to finding his way down such a dark hole, fumbled clumsily and stepped cautiously from one step to another.

"On my word," he grumbled, "I never knew there was such a dirty place as this in the house."

"It's all right, sir," I said

"But the stairs are rotten and wouldn't hold two people," he replied.

We stood there at the foot of the stairs waiting for Maxine to appear; Fraser was dusting his hands and clothes, and I was anxiously awaiting the moment when I should carry out my part of the program. Maxine did not appear for some time, and I was growing worried when he called:

"A little more light, Montague."

Mr. Fraser stopped his dusting and cleaning long enough to turn the light up as high as it would go, and at the same instant Maxine's legs appeared above, as he commenced to descend the stairs. Fraser's back was turned, and I tested the props without attracting his attention. When Maxine was halfway down I stumbled forward in the semi-gloom, and in an apparent effort to save myself clutched frantically at the two upright joists. They fell forward under my weight, precipitating me, greatly to my surprise, to the damp, musty floor, where I lay sprawling in disgust and annoyance.

Perhaps this unexpected accident served our purpose better than we anticipated, for Mr. Fraser turned to me with a word of sympathy, and Maxine had an opportunity to throw his weight heavily on the stairs. They were stronger than he had figured; and I saw him working desperately to wrench them from their moorings. Suddenly there was a creak [illegible]ing wood, and then a crash with a cloud of dust and dirt. Maxine leaped aside just as the stairs collapsed.

"On my word now! What's happened?" exclaimed Mr. Fraser, turning hastily

"Rotten old stairs!" growled Maxine, wiping the dirt and grime from his hands and clothes. "Good thing we didn't all descend at once."

"Well, now, we're in a pretty mess!" said Mr. Fraser, looking first at the entrance above and then at the broken stairs. "How're we going to get out of this beastly hole?"

"We'll find a ladder somewhere down here," replied Maxine. "Look around, Montague."

Maxine limped as if injured by the

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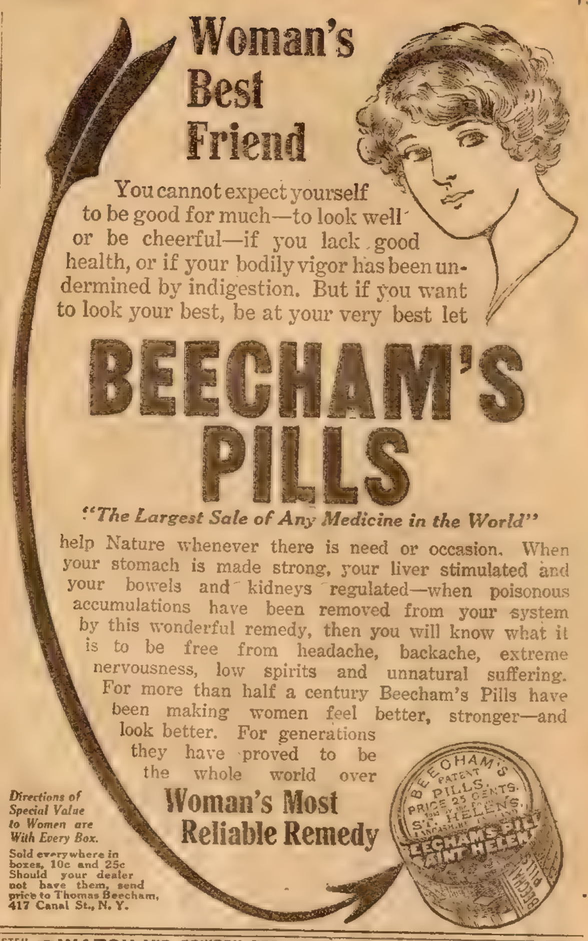

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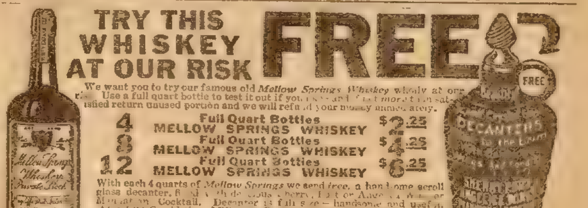

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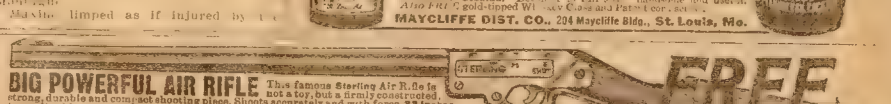

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[illegible] Mr. Fraser paid no attention to this until I had groped around in the darkness and dragged a ladder forth. [illegible] breathed a sigh of relief, and [illegible]

"You didn't hurt yourself in the fall, did you, Mr. Maxine?"

"It jarred me considerable, and I believe I did wrench my ankle; it pains a little."

"[illegible] a careless piece of work to leave [illegible] stairs like that standing. [illegible] we go up the ladder and report [illegible] matter?"

Maxine winced with pain and replied regretfully:

"Yes, I think we'd better postpone this [illegible]gation until another time. My [illegible] I fear, is severely wrenched."

"[illegible] we'd better let it go now; it's [illegible]ky and dirty down here," replied [illegible] Fraser.

"You can go up first, Mr. Fraser, and I'll follow; Montague can come last and [illegible] me a boost."

I adjusted the ladder, and Mr. Fraser not unwillingly headed the procession up it. He climbed slowly and gingerly, [illegible] the sides of the ladder, and when near the top he reached up and [illegible] the floor above. Maxine followed [illegible] and I brought up the rear. I was still all in the dark concerning this queer adventure. Why had Maxine led us into the cellar, only to return immediately [illegible] stairs had collapsed? I [illegible] some trick to frighten [illegible], or at least some harrowing [illegible] that would intimidate him and throw him off his guard; but here we [illegible] the tamest [illegible] of [illegible] adventure which seemed to me [illegible] foolish as it was [illegible].

Maxine's feet were off the [illegible] of the ladder before I began the ascent; then I [illegible] with sudden [illegible]. For an instant it seemed [illegible] the [illegible] of our adventures had reached [illegible] conclusion.

There was a flash and explosion that illuminated the whole interior of the basement and sub-cellar. It came so suddenly and unexpectedly that I stepped back with a little exclamation of fear. Above I could hear Mr. Fraser.

"My word, what was that?"

"I was merely taking a flashlight photograph of the entrance," Maxine replied calmly. "Did it frighten you?"

"Did it frighten me? I thought the whole house was going up in an explosion. These bombs and murders are getting onto my nerves. I think I'll go above and see Miss Dorothy."

When I reached the floor above he was already retreating toward the basement door. Maxine turned on the light, and we stood a moment blinking and staring at each other.

"If you don't need me any more, I'll go now," continued Mr. Fraser, moving through the doorway.

When he had gone Maxine turned toward me, and the look of anger and disgust on his face [illegible] me.

"Montague, we're a couple of fools," [illegible]. "[illegible] Didn't you notice it?"

## CHAPTER XI

MAXINE'S unjust criticism, implied in his question, I let pass, for when wrought up in his pursuit of a criminal he was often testy and unreasonable, and instead of resenting it, I turned to him and asked the meaning of all the curious adventure.

"Are you so blind, M[illegible]?" he [illegible]. "I wanted his fingerprints, and the trap was set so elaborately that I thought I could get them without exciting his suspicions. And now the whole thing has failed! Confound his old gloves! Why did he wear them down here? Was he afraid of soiling his white hands?"

In his disgust he flung the pocket camera, which he always carried, on a nearby trunk, and pushed his hands angrily through his hair.

"Yes, the whole night's work is wasted," he continued, "and all be[illegible] of our stupidity."

"If I had known, Maxine," I replied, "I might have helped you; but you told me nothing about the meaning of this little adventure."

"You're right, Montague," he said after a pause, smiling at me; "I was unjust to you. Of course, you were not to blame. It was only my own stupidity. Well, I must make another try at it."

"What was the trap you set for him?" I asked.

He pointed to the floor near the entrance to the sub-cellar. There was a [illegible] scattered all over it, with handprints and footprints [illegible] from the coal cellar. The reason for the little excursion below became plain to me in a flash.

Maxine had [illegible] the last to descend into the [illegible], and while we had waited for him below, he had spread a thick layer of flour all about the entrance. Mr. Fraser [illegible] the ladder first. As [illegible] out of the hole he would naturally clutch at the floor [illegible], and thus imprint the outlines of his hands and fingers in the [illegible]. The trap would have worked beautifully if Mr. Fraser had not worn gloves, and [illegible] his fingerprints.

Maxine had taken the double precaution of preserving the fingerprints by [illegible]. I could reach the top and [illegible] my own hands and feet [illegible].

[illegible] The padded imprints of the gloved hands were [illegible]. Mr. Fraser had apparently [illegible] the [illegible] of the entrance with firm hands, so that if the ladder had collapsed as the stairs had done, he would not drop below.

"[illegible]," Maxine remarked, picking up his camera in disgust. [illegible] [illegible]ned it out [illegible]

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[illegible] adventure be[illegible] the [illegible] partly re[illegible]ed his ne[illegible] was doing his best to pose as a he[illegible]

"Are you hurt much, Mr. Maxine?" Miss Seldon asked; and Maxine had to feign a limp, which he had quite forgotten to [illegible] and complain that the wrench had [illegible] twisted his ankle.

"It was a [illegible] fall you had, Mr. Maxine," said Mr. Fraser, "and I'm thankful I didn't [illegible] in that beastly hole. It [illegible] hole, and——"

He returned the gloves and slapped them together.

"Why, you're all covered with flour!" exclaimed Miss Seldon.

"Yes," said Maxine, "the servants must have spilt it over the floor. Let me have your gloves, Mr. Fraser, and I will dust them."

While he dexterously swung the gloves and dusted, Maxine took every opportunity to examine them, even turning them inside out to study the fingertips; but his investigations apparently proved of no value. He finally handed them back to their owner and smiled.

"We'll try it again some night, Mr. Fraser," he remarked.

"I don't know that I'm so keen to go down there again, Mr. Maxine. I don't think I could help you much in your investigations."

"Just as you say, Mr. Fraser."

"What was it you expected to find, Mr. Maxine?" asked Dorothy Seldon, inquisitively. "I'd dearly like to know. But," pouting, "I don't suppose you will tell me. I can't get anything from the police. They simply shake their heads and try to look wise. I suppose that's part of the game."

"Yes," laughed Maxine, "it's a part of the game—bluff. When your detective tries to look the wisest, he's generally the farthest from the right clew; but he has to conceal his own ignorance. I will leave you now; we've disturbed you enough for one night."

We stood in the hall ready to depart, when Maxine suddenly exclaimed: "Where's my camera, Montague? Oh, I left it in the basement. I will be with you directly."

He was gone for some time, and I stood there talking with Dorothy and her fiance, wondering all the time what was detaining Maxine. When he finally appeared, I glanced inquiringly at him, but his face betrayed no signs of anything unusual.

"I was foolish to destroy that plate," he confided, when once we were out in the open air. "It might be of value yet; so I stopped long enough to take another photograph."

It was long past midnight when we reached home. Maxine flung himself in his chair and scowled darkly as the thought of the evening's misadventures returned to him. I left him there deep in thought, and hurried to my room to turn in for a few hours' sleep before morning.

Maxine showed signs of a sleepless night the next day; he had apparently dropped off in his chair and dozed fitfully, and these cat naps had left him dull and dejected. Shortly before noon I developed the picture he had taken of the basement interior, and carried it to him. The sight of it recalled the previous evening's exploits, and he looked at it in disgust.

"File it away, Montague," he said in a listless tone. "It's of little use, but it will always serve as a reminder that we can all make mistakes."

"It's a pretty good picture," I said, with pardonable pride. "Everything stands out clearly."

"All the more pity we didn't succeed in our plan."

He took it and glanced carelessly at it. The prints of hands and feet in the flour were clearly outlined. Glancing over his shoulder I studied them critically. There were the gloved fingerprints of Mr. Fraser and the deeper outlines of his feet. I could see my own fingerprints and footprints, also. Maxine had taken particular care not to touch the flour-covered floor with his hands so [illegible] be no confusion about it.

Once more he handed the photograph to me as if to dismiss the subject from mind; but he drew back and squinted hard at it for an instant. Suddenly his hand went out eagerly and picked up his powerful magnifying glass. This he applied to one corner of the picture and remained perfectly quiet and absorbed. I caught the quick intake of his breath, and noticed that the hand holding the glass trembled ever so slightly. The head bent lower and lower over the picture, and the eyes were glued to it with great intensity. I stirred uneasily and shifted my position at his side; but still he did not move or speak.

When he finally raised his head, his eyes were flashing and his face was white and haggard. He got up and moved over to the sideboard and helped himself to a glass of whisky; his hand trembled as he raised the glass to his lips.

Fortified by this stimulant, he returned to his seat and began studying the photograph again. His actions puzzled me; he was clearly aroused from his listlessness, and something in the photograph was responsible for his excitement.

"Montague," he said, when he finally sat upright and stared at me, "this must be an illusion. It can't be true."

"What is it, sir?" I asked in consternation.

"The fingerprints," he muttered. "They're here in this corner near the ladder."

I bent over and followed his pointing hand, and there in an obscure corner of the photograph were imprints I had not noticed before; it was necessary even now to use the powerful magnifying glass to make them out clearly. I squinted long and earnestly, and then dropped the glass with a little exclamation of astonishment.

"You see them?" Maxine queried, as if anxious to have his own vision verified. "They're there, Montague, aren't they? It's not an allusion; I'm not dreaming."

"Yes, sir, they're there," I responded hoarsely.

"A thumb and three fingers?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, nodding. "But how'd they get there?"

"They were not there when we both examined the place, Montague?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"Then he must have been in that cellar and followed after us."

"Impossible, sir!" I said vigorously. "We would have seen him."

"Then he must have come in through the basement, Montague; he was there, following us, hovering about us all the while, laughing at us, perhaps."

"Are you sure they're the same prints, Maxine?" I asked, still skeptical.

"There's no doubt about it; I can never forget that thumb and forefinger, and now we have the middle finger and another. Ah, Montague, he presents us with another fingerprint each time! He's writing his signature slowly but surely. I wonder when we'll get the final print."

"You think then he was in the cellar or basement all the time?" I continued, picking up the photograph with a trembling hand to examine it more closely.

The fingerprints of our unknown, implacable enemy were so clearly defined in the flour that, under the powerful lens, there could be no mistake. There were the same prominent lines and whorl of the thumb; the sharp ridges and protuberances of the forefinger, and the delicately curved lines of the middle finger. Having studied the characteristics of these fingerprints so many times under Maxine's tuition, I felt that I could not be misled. The more I examined them, the greater my conviction grew that our mysterious criminal had either been in the cellar with us or immediately after we left it.

"The plot thickens, Montague," Maxine exclaimed, after a long pause. "Our man is not afraid of us; he flaunts his marks continually in our face; he follows us wherever we go, and defies us to identify him. So far he has succeeded; he has baffled us at every turn, but soon it will come our time. Yes, Montague, we will close with him yet."

Once more Maxine rubbed his hand in delight at being baffled, and instead of losing courage he became as pleased and happy as a child. After a moment he laid the photograph aside and addressed me more seriously.

"That eliminates both Parks and Mr. Fraser from the problem, Montague. Our little adventure was not without its results, after all."

"How so?" I asked, not following him.

"Why, it couldn't be Parks, could it? Parks is in jail, and this man was there last night following us."

"Just so; just so," I rejoined quickly. "Of course, Parks couldn't have been there."

"Then Parks couldn't have been the murderer—not if my theory of fingerprints holds good, and undoubtedly it does. This man who committed the trunk outrage has flaunted his defiance in my face ever since; he has followed me and dared me to disclose his identity. Parks is innocent."

"But Mr. Fraser?" I remarked.

"The presence of the man's fingerprints establishes Mr. Fraser's innocence also. Mr. Fraser had gloves on his hands; here are his muffled prints all over the picture; you can trace them from the time he reached the top of the ladder until he got to his feet. We do not need any further evidence that he is not the man we're looking for."

"Then we're as much in the dark as ever?"

"No, not quite, Montague. We have eliminated Parks and Mr. Fraser; that's something gained; and we've established the fact that the murderer is either inside the Seldon house, working as a servant, or he has ready access to it through some secret passage. Which theory do you choose, Montague?"

I shook my head doubtfully. I had no theory; I was at a loss to explain the circumstances, and too disturbed to advance any suggestions.

"I don't like it," I exclaimed, after a pause. "It seems almost uncanny, Maxine. This creature hovers about us all the time, invisible, but forever making his presence known, and we can't even get a glimpse of his face. We don't know whether he is white, black, brown, or yellow; whether he is young or old, handsome or ugly; we have nothing to judge him by except these fingerprints which he leaves for our benefit. It's getting onto my nerves, sir, and—and I wish——"

Maxine smiled at my agitation, and said softly:

"Haven't we often wished to encounter a man like this, Montague? Some one who could match our wits and meet us on equal terms? Some one who could make the problem of pursuit worth while? And now, Montague, the minute we find such a man you cringe and weaken and tremble at his approach. Perhaps you need a rest and change. If you do, there's no reason why you shouldn't take it. I will follow up the trail alone, and sooner or later we shall meet—this unknown genius and I."

Ashamed of my outburst of weakness, I quickly assured him that I had no intention of abandoning it, and as he graciously accepted my apology, we soon forgot the momentary disagreement. But while I resolutely put aside all ideas of abandoning the case, I could not so easily control my feelings. The fact that some invisible, implacable foe was pursuing us, hovering over us night and day, dogging our footsteps and leaving evidence of his presence in unmistakable ways, created in me a sense of fear and premonition. I began to wake up in my sleep under the impression that a black hand was stretching out to choke me; I saw those prominent fingerprints every time I closed my eyes; and at times I imagined I heard again that same diabolical laugh, half-human and half-animal, that had come from Maxine's study on the night we received the message concerning the bomb. It gave me the cold shivers whenever I recalled that horrible cry and laugh. What uncanny, inhuman being made it?

(Continued next week.)

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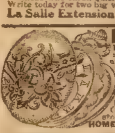

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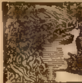

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COPIES WEEKLY.

When in doubt, tell the truth.

Lazy people usually have busy tongues.

Matchmakers never set the world on fire.

If it's a woman and the shoe pinches, she buys it.

Lots of men who have an aim in life lack ammunition.

There is less fun in gambling if you can afford to lose.

An egotist is a man who thinks he is better than you are.

Tombstone inscriptions are generally too good to be true.

More push than ambition is needed to operate a wheelbarrow.

Palmistry is not for the man who is afraid to show his hand.

The woman who does her own housework has no time to flirt.

Happiness often consists of not getting the things we don't want.

Young man, beware of a girl who says she intends to be a spinster.

Many a man who hitches his wagon to a star finds himself up in the air.

According to accepted standards the [illegible] side of politics is the inside.

Carelessness is nearly always the most costly item in an expense account

Never put off till tomorrow what any one is willing to do for you today.

Cheap people are always looking for something cheaper than themselves.

Some enterprising tailor should invent a wife-proof pocket for married men.

Sometimes the only man who comes out ahead in a lawsuit is the lawyer.

The better some men know themselves, the more suspicious they are of others.

The morning after the night before is responsible for many good resolutions.

[illegible] many invitations to lubri[illegible] gets when he is on the water wagon.

[illegible] spinster has married she may [illegible] at she merely drew a consolation [illegible]

When a man says he was driven to drink, he always insinuates that some woman handled the ribbons.

If a young man tells a girl she's all the world to him, she thinks he is justified in trying to get the earth.

Many of the world's great men are unknown to fame. They are great because they share their pleasures with others and keep their troubles to themselves.

# PEPPERS

### Looked Like His Father.

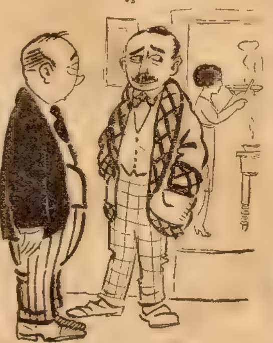
William had just returned from college, resplendent in peg top trousers, silk hosiery, a fancy waistcoat, and a necktie that spoke for itself. He entered the library, where his father was reading. The old gentleman looked up and surveyed his son. The longer he looked the more disgusting he became.

"Son," he finally blurted out, "you look like a fool!"

Later the old Major, who lived next door, came in and greeted the boy heartily

"William," he said, with undisguised admiration, "you look exactly like your father did twenty years ago when he came back from school!"

"Yes," replied William, with a smile, "so father was just telling me."



Hewitt—"Is your wife a good cook?"
Jewett—"Say, she builds a pie that mother wouldn't have dared to make."

### Good Wireless Work.

The couple (the names didn't filter with the rest of the story) got on a boat for Philadelphia, where they expected to be married. The girl's father got on to the fact that they were on the boat, but too late to prevent them from sailing. But the young man was resourceful. He looked up the wireless operator and told him his story.

"He suspects where we are," he concluded, "and will meet us at the dock and throw me overboard, which will annoy my fiancee and bring unpleasant notoriety to your boat."

"What do you want me to do about it?" asked the wireless operator, sympathetically.

"I want you to speak to a friend on the Boston boat, and just ask him to wireless for forgiveness and sign my name."

"What good will that do?"

"What good will it do! Why, the old man will meet the other boat!"

In a few minutes long sparks were leaping through the darkened air of the wireless room, while the generators purred contentedly between decks. Did the irate father purr contentedly when he met the Boston boat? He did not.

### Two Good Guessers.

Harry Jamison, who travels for a firm in Cincinnati, O., came into Chicago some time ago on his regular run and put up at the Hotel LaSalle. A customer came to have dinner with him in the evening and together they descended to the dining-room. Flowers on the table attracted them

"Mighty pretty jonquils, those," remarked Jamison, lightly waving to the buds.

"Jonquils!" exclaimed the customer. "I laugh. Have you never seen a jack rose?"

"I know little of flowers, I admit," replied Jamison, "but gladly will I make a small wager. Come, I will call the waiter.

The waiter appeared and was questioned.

"We have had a slight dispute regarding these flowers," said Jamison. "We would like you to tell us whether they are jonquils or jack roses."

The waiter hesitated, then bowed

"They are young white chrysanthemums," he said

### No Use Running After It.

"Yes," said the man just back from the West, "when I went to Montana I did what nearly every other tenderfoot does—bought one of those broad-brimmed felt hats like the ones stage cowboys wear, and put it on at the first opportunity.

"Mine wasn't the only one in town, but I felt conspicuous just the same. Somehow or other I hadn't acquired the knack of wearing it. One windy day—and, believe me, it can blow some—in B—— without half trying—I walked down the main street of the town holding onto my hat with one hand and my coat with the other. As I turned a corner the wind seemed to stop blowing, and I let go of the hat, when a sudden gust came, took it off my head and sent it rolling like a frightened hoop down the street.

"I started to give chase, when another hatless man—he was a sure enough Westerner, too—took me by the arm and said:

"'Don't chase it, pardner; there'll be another one along in a minute!'"

### Frenzied Finance.

John D. Rockefeller called two little boys over to him. He said to one: "Johnnie, if I give you a dollar what will you do with it?"

Johnnie said: "I'll put it in the bank and let it draw interest until it gets to be a hundred, then a thousand, and so on, until I get as much as you got."

"Very good," said John D. "Here's the dollar Now, Tommy, what would you do with a dollar?"

Tommy said: "First I would change the dollar into two halves, the two halves into four quarters, the four quarters into ten dimes, the ten dimes into twenty nickels, the twenty nickels into a hundred pennies."

"Why should you do all this?" asked John D.

Tommy replied: "Well, somebody may make a mistake."

### Wonderful Sense of Touch.

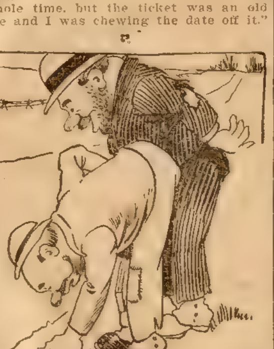
One of two darkies who run a bootblack "parlor" in partnership was bragging of his well developed sense of touch, particularly in the matter of money. He boasted that he could tell the denomination of any United States coin merely by feeling it. His partner wearied of these boasts, and came back with this:

"Your sense o' feelin' ain't nothin' to my friend Marcus. Him and me used to work on the Pullman down through Kansas Marcus had been on this route for about ten years One night when we was both asleepin', 'long around midnight I wakes up and I shakes Marcus and I says: 'Marcus, where are we?' An' Marcus he jest rolls over and sticks his hand out the window an' he says, 'We're goin' through Oswego.'"

### He Laughed Last.

The old man in the rear car seemed greatly agitated at not being able to find his ticket when the conductor came through. Finally that official, with a hearty laugh, informed him that he had it in his mouth, which he seemed surprised to find true, and handed it over After the conductor had passed into the next car the old fellow's companion started to make fun of him for having the ticket in his mouth and not being able to find it, whereupon he responded.

"He who laughs last, me lad, laughs best. I knew it was in me mouth the whole time, but the ticket was an old one and I was chewing the date off it."



"I wonder if it ain't a fake that horseshoes has luck?"

"No; a horseshoe hit me once't, an' I was took to a hospital an' fed an' rested for two weeks."

### Raising the Dust.

From Berlin comes to hand a story of a German driving an English friend a little way outside the capital. A motor-car came tearing past them at a terrific pace, followed by a tremendous cloud of dust.

"Ah!" remarked the German, "there goes our Emperor!"

"How do you know?" inquired the English friend, who could not distinguish the occupants of the car as it flashed by.

"Do you suppose anyone else in the world could raise such a dust?" was the Teuton's reply.

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# Jack Sewell's Fortunes

## Or, Among the Pearl Islands By St. George Rathborne

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### CHAPTER I.

### UNDER MAZATLAN LIGHT.

MAZATLAN light glowed dead ahead like a star of the first magnitude, as the brigantine Casablanca shot [illegible] the placid Mexican harbor of the same name.

Out yonder from whence the vessel had just come, the old Pacific was still heaving and tossing in the after-throes of a storm, so that a snug harbor must seem very inviting to such Jack Tars as had lately escaped from its violence.

There was at least one aboard the old [illegible] who, during this [illegible], was [illegible] forward to their arrival in port [illegible] eagerness than [illegible] on actual hunger.

Jack Sewell was as likely a lad as ever roamed the seven seas. A native of New Orleans, he had made several voyages across the Gulf to the coast of Mexico and Central America before venturing upon the broad bosom of the [illegible], and had met with numerous adventures for one so young.

His presence aboard the brigantine was not in the nature of an accident, although he had been made so miserable for him by the brutal captain, aided and abetted by the mate, that he was bound to take "French leave" at the very first favorable opportunity, which would possibly be at Mazatlan.

Of all those on the trader there was [illegible] a solitary chap for whose company Jack cared in the least, a lanky "Conch," going by the peculiar name of Oscar Thatch, from the Florida keys, a sponge [illegible], who had drifted far from his native heath in search of new [illegible]. At one time when Jack was enjoying a bath over the side, while the brigantine lay at anchor in a harbor [illegible] Central American coast, he had been confronted by a vicious man-eating shark; and having had no experience with such monsters of the deep, it might have gone hard with him but [illegible] Thatch, who, knife in hand, had leaped overboard and given Mr. Shark all he wanted, and much more in the line of excitement.

Jack was from that hour drawn toward the lanky sponger, and acquaintance revealed the fact that under a most unprepossessing exterior Oscar had a heart of gold, and was quite a philosopher in his crude way.

As he stood leaning over the bulwarks watching the lights of the Mexican town blinking in the distance, though constantly growing brighter as the old [illegible] shortened the space lying between, Jack's thoughts were upon this friend, and he was debating the advisability of taking Oscar into his confidence.

It was not alone the fact of his having decided to run away from the ship that occupied his mind. There was something back of this, connected with his presence in the Pacific, and particularly in relation to this same quaint port of Mazatlan—something that was destined to have a bearing on his fortunes; and it would be a wretched piece of business if he made a mistake at this early stage of the game in choosing a comrade who might fail to come up to expectations.

"But somehow I like Oscar more than any fellow I ever ran across. He's got a warm heart under his chaff, and I know a braver rover never hung by his teeth from reeling spar through a gale. Haven't I seen his spirit tested more than once during this dog-time of a voyage, not to speak of the occasion when he gave that sea tiger his come-up-with when the brute meant to make a meal off me. I'd hate to think I'd never see him again, and I've got a bully notion to sound him on the subject, if the chance comes.

Thus communing with himself, Jack [illegible] around, and to his delight discovered the object of his thoughts advancing; for they had passed the lighthouse by this time, and received some benefit from the glow that came from the lantern, borne aloft in the tower as a beacon to storm-tossed mariners.

"'Ello! what's doing 'ere, Jack, hold cock? Hi missed you below, hand 'ad han idea you'd be somewhere 'ereabouts. The lights begin to show hup strong yonder hin the town, eh. Hand Hi himagine these 'ere Mexicans has some strong when hit comes to 'aving a jolly good time hat night. Hi wonder now hif the bloomin' hold shark means to let hus go ashore hand see the sights? D'ye know, Hi've a bally good notion to hook hit, hand take chances hamong the dons. 'Ang the luck. Hi feel 'arf starved aboard this Noah's Hark, hand hif Hi stay 'ere ha bit longer, me hand that [illegible] mate'll 'ave a dust-up for keeps."

This was the cheery greeting of the "Conch," who, like others of his breed, born upon some West India island, and never in London during the course of his life still seemed to have as much difficulty in handling his 'hs' as any Cockney.

Jack was more pleased than he could express to hear him talk after this fashion, because it gave him hope that the other would jump at his proposal and he chose to consider that this was the answer Fate gave to his mental question concerning the advisability of taking Oscar into his confidence. He immediately thrust out his hand and caught the fist of the lanky lad.

"That settles it for me, Oscar. To tell you the truth I have long since made up my mind to get ashore here, and stay away. I'm sick of being bullied by such a couple of brutes as our captain and mate; and besides, I have another reason for wanting to [illegible] around Mazatlan a bit, which I meant to tell you if so be you thought it worth while to stick by me. I'm under some obligations to you, old fellow, and——"

"Stow that, hand belay your jaw-tackle, Jack, me boy. You're hunder no hobligations hin the least to me; hand while H'im habout hit, let me say that Hi took considerable stock hin you the first time Hi saw you. H'im tired hof bein' chivied aboard this 'ere bloomin' craft, hand if so be you mean to duck hout, count hon me to stand by has your chum. Put hit there, hold matey."

The partnership was accordingly cemented by another sturdy handshake, after which Jack started to tell just how he meant to get ashore; for he felt sure the captain anticipated that he would have an inclination to quit his job, and hence give him little opportunity for flight.

When two such wide-awake chaps as Jack and Oscar Thatch put their heads together, with an object in view, it must be a clever combination of circumstances that can hold them back.

While they exchanged views and laid their plans, the brigantine kept working further into the harbor, and the lights of Mazatlan assumed a larger sphere in the dark and gloomy semicircle of shore spread out ahead.

While the breeze was in the other quarter, and favorable to their movements, now and then there were wafted from the lighted city faint sounds of merriment; and it was evident that Mazatlan, like all other subtropical cities where the Spanish-speaking race holds sway, believed in having a jolly time after the sun had gone to rest, and the heat was tempered by the cooling night air.

These sounds were no lure to the two lads who talked for half an hour during the dogwatch, since their minds were concerned with other things than the thought of joining in the festivities of the merrymakers ashore. Jack Sewell had weighty matters to settle, and already Oscar had been taken into his confidence far enough to have his interest aroused, and feel an urgent desire to see the New Orleans boy through his adventures.

Presently the gruff voice of the mate was heard above the creaking of cordage and the sound of music, ordering both watches on deck, as they were about to come up in the wind and anchor until morning, when a more permanent anchorage could be taken, while they carried on the business that had drawn the brigantine to this port.

So the two friends and fellow conspirators had to join their mates and do what duty demanded. The vessel swung around until her blunt nose pointed into the wind, there was the rattling of ropes [illegible] blocks, many lurid exclamations on the part of the gigantic mate, and by degrees order came out of all this seeming chaos, with the Casablanca all taut alow and aloft, and tugging at her anchor, with a fair tide setting in toward the city.

The two intended deserters had settled upon their plans. They knew the tide would be at the flood somewhere in the neighborhood of 2 o'clock that night, and if they delayed their departure longer than that they would have to buck up against the ebb, which would make matters all the harder for their enterprise, and perhaps add an unwelcome zest of danger in the line of being carried out to sea. Already was there enough peril about slipping their cable without this additional chance; so they had determined upon getting away between midnight and one, if so be the opportunity was ripe.

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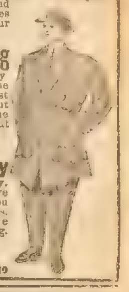

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for their worldly possessions could readily be carried in their pocket handkerchiefs; but buoyant hearts count more than coronets when face to face with difficulties, and both lads awaited the critical moment with keen anxiety but resolute spirits.

Perhaps Captain Jenkins might endeavor to hunt them up, though knowing his grasping nature as they did, they felt pretty certain he would count it gain to be rid of the twain without having to pay them what they had earned during the time of their service, which in the case of Oscar was no small item, since he had been with the brigantine some months without seeing the color of his money. At any rate, they fancied they would have little difficulty in hiding from any half-hearted searching party that might be sent ashore; and as the stay of the vessel was limited to twenty-four hours in the harbor, their trouble must be of brief duration.

It was about one o'clock that night when the two lads slipped over the side of the vessel, lowering themselves by the aid of a rope that had been thoughtfully provided beforehand; and once they were in the water they struck out for the shore, both being excellent swimmers.

It was fortunate for them that the night happened to be pitch dark, for some sound made as they reached the water must have come to the ear of the watch on deck, as a gruff voice demanded to know who was below, and upon no answer being given some confusion arose, followed by the hasty lowering of a boat; for possibly the mate had anticipated some such flight on the part of Jack, whom he had been watching secretly for several days

The swimmers, by taking a roundabout course, had no difficulty in avoiding the boat, and ere half an hour elapsed they crawled ashore, dripping wet, but exulting in the fact that they had been enabled to give the old villain of a captain, as well as his fellow Tartar of a mate, the slip.

One episode of Jack Sewell's adventurous life had thus been closed, and another was about to open, with strange happenings upon the horizon.

## CHAPTER II.

## AT PEDRO AGRILLO'S.

UPON taking stock our young adventurers found that they were possessed of a joint capital of just seven dollars not a fortune, it is true, but an amount capable of bringing them considerable of comfort in the line of food, if used with discretion.

At this hour of the night the air can be quite cool, even in a subtropical country like Mexico, and hence the first thought of the wanderers was in the line of finding some means of drying their clothing.

They had come ashore upon the outskirts of the town, and not far away lay a shack of some sort, a very humble residence, it is true, but capable of providing warmth if so be they could gain the good will of the occupant, who in all probability must be some peon or laborer.

Oscar took it upon himself to lead off, and they were soon rattling at the rude door of the shack, which operation quickly brought a frightened Mexican halfbreed to view, he doubtless believing the police officials of Mazatlan must be after him in regard to certain connections he may have had with the contrabandista, who smuggled forbidden articles of commerce into the country without paying duty on the same.

Oscar could chatter in Spanish even better than he could converse in his own native tongue, and he soon eased the mind of the alarmed citizen, offering him pay for a chance to dry their garments before a fire and a "snack" to eat; all of which the fellow readily promised to accommodate them with, such was his gratitude at his narrow escape from being hauled to town and placed in the Black Hole as a suspect.

When an hour later they left the lone shack and started for town, the runaways from the brigantine were feeling in fine fettle, being dry without and fortified within with such eatables as the peon chanced to have on hand, not particularly appetizing, it is true, but filling enough.

They might have remained with him the rest of the night, but Jack did not particularly fancy the looks of the interior of the shack, and believed he could rest easier in the open.

Finding a likely spot, they threw themselves upon the ground and soon found forgetfulness in slumber, from which they did not awaken until the sun's warm rays, falling upon their faces, brought a realization of the fact that day had come

The first thing they looked for was the brigantine, and both lads laughed in glee to see her swinging at her anchor a mile or less out upon the water, for they never expected to set foot on her hated deck again

They immediately set out for town, and in good time found themselves in the streets of Mazatlan, in which the inhabitants were already astir, for much business is conducted in the cool of the early morning, a siesta being considered absolutely necessary at high noon, when the heat is usually terrific.

It was the plan of our boys to keep low until the brigantine had set sail, and consequently they showed themselves as little as possible during the whole day, having found a retreat with one Pedro Agrillo, a Mexican with whom Oscar had once sailed in company, and who was keeping a sort of tavern, or poseda, here, as the "Conch" had remembered before they quitted the ship.

Pedro was not well favored so far as his physiognomy was concerned, and Jack did not fancy him to any great extent; but, like all sailors, he had long since learned that it is "any port in a storm," and if they could only lie low in this ramshackle establishment of Agrillo's until the brigantine had cleared out, it would be all they could ask—Pedro had naught to do with them or the mission that brought young Sewell to this part of the Mexican coast.

If the captain hunted at all for the runaways, he failed to make use of a dragnet in searching Mazatlan, for the day passed without any alarm, and with the shades of night drawing on apace, Oscar, who had been abroad on some little personal errand, came back and reported the pleasing intelligence that he had seen the hated vessel leaving harbor, so that all uneasiness from this quarter could be cast aside.

Meanwhile Jack had been quietly carrying on a little investigation of his own, with the landlord of the tavern as a subject. He asked numerous questions, seeking to gain certain information that was necessary to his plans without in any way arousing the suspicions of mine host; for Pedro was a man who might prove a very unpleasant customer, once his avarice was tapped.

He fancied that the other started and looked a bit queerly at him when, in the most natural way possible, he mentioned having run across a strange old Mosquito Coast Indian, by name Negrito, when cruising in the Gulf, and who he had learned was somewhere in this region at the time. He had been given a message for the wanderer by one of his relatives, and being under certain obligations to the family for favors received, he desired to find the said Negrito, if it were possible, while he chanced to be in Mazatlan.

Pedro knew the man in question very well, he quickly admitted. Indeed, the old Indian often came to the taproom of the tavern to quench his thirst, and it was rather singular that he had not shown up that same day. However, he could inform the young senor just where Negrito might be found when at home, and, in fact, if it would be any accommodation at all, he would be only too pleased to accompany him thither immediately.

Jack took the alarm from his eagerness, and guessed that Negrito must be an object of more than ordinary interest in Mazatlan. He even suspected that Pedro might be acquainted with the fact that the old Mosquito Coast native carried a secret in his possession that many a man would give much to share; and had immediately jumped to the conclusion that the coming of these two exiles must in some measure have to do with this mystery.

Pedro would be a good one to avoid in the future, then, if this were so; and having reached this resolution, Jack hastened to shut up like a clam.

He had attained his main object, at any rate, which was to learn whether the Indian still hung out at Mazatlan, and where he could be found. Pedro had in some way let this latter piece of intelligence slip from him before he fully realized its value, and when the lad failed to jump at his offer of guidance, he knew that if he hoped to learn anything further he could only do it by spying upon the two young salts when they went forth to seek Negrito.

No sooner had Jack left the company of the landlord than the latter dispatched a messenger with a hastily scrawled note directed to one Senor Jose Marillo, a caballero of note in the town of Mazatlan, who was looked upon as a nabob by his neighbors, since he owned the finest establishment on the coast and had many retainers in his employ

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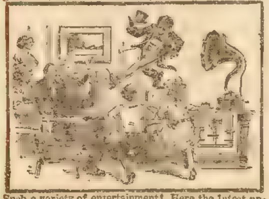

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Unconscious of the fact that their coming had thus early begun to stir up a hornets' nest, Jack and his comrade talked matters over aside, and planned to pay the intended visit to old Negrito after supper.

"We must keep an eye on Pedro, for I'm sure the man has a suspicion about our coming to this place, and that it never was brought about by accident. He knows something about Negrito, and perhaps others also may in Mazatlan, for if it's suspected that the old Indian carries about with him such a valuable secret, he would naturally be an object of tremendous interest to every man-jack in the town; for no people on the face of the earth are keener to gobble a rich stake that's waiting to be picked up than these same Mexicans. When we shape our course for the house where Negrito is to be found we must act natural, as if we hadn't anything to hide. The chance will come to talk with my copper-colored friend in secret, and if he keeps his word and joins us, we'll find some way to slip out of this hole in the night, and sail up the coast toward the Lower California Gulf, where our search lies."

So Jack put the matter, and his companion agreed with him perfectly, for it seemed that almost invariably their minds ran in the same channel.

"By the bye, Jack, me boy, what sort hof trouble did you find the nigger hin hat the time you hassisted him? You never mentioned that, you know, when telling me the bloomin' story. Not that Hi want to seem hinquisitive, but since Hi'm bound to meet the beggar soon, perhaps hit would be wise to put me hin touch with the 'ole hincident, so Hi can draw me hown conclusions," said Oscar, urged on by the natural curiosity he felt, and interested in everything that pertained to the checkered past of this new friend, who had already crept into the innermost recesses of his big heart.

"Well, you see it didn't amount to a great deal, though the old fellow was of a mind to magnify my services, and declare that I had saved his life. You understand, he had been pretty much of a wanderer for years, on account of some family troubles at home, and so it happened that I ran across him down on the coast of Mexico, near Vera Cruz, where my ship was loading with mahogany wood. To make a long story short, he was in some sort of scrape with a party of angry filibusters, who accused him of being a Government spy, and were rather bent on stringing the old fellow up to a tree, when I happened along. I had with me the captain's repeating rifle, a pretty fine Marlin that he thought the world of, but even then I knew I was no match for half a dozen excited rascals, some of them toughs from New Orleans, I realized, recognizing their faces; so it was up to me to play a trick if I wanted to save the old Indian from a quick fate.

"Well, I hid in the chaparral, began rattling off shots from my gun in rapid-fire style, shouted like mad, and on the whole carried on as if a dozen patriots might be rushing the camp, bent upon seizing the invaders. It worked to perfection, for the filibusters' nerves were all on edge after a recent wreck of their vessel on the rocks; so that they fled like mad, never looking back to see what manner of enemy had attacked the camp; and then I found it easy enough to cut the old Indian free, so that we both ducked and got clean away; nor did the six fellows ever find out the truth, to my knowledge. At least, they never bothered me about it.

"That's how the wizened-up old chief of the Mosquito Coast natives comes to think he owes Jack Sewell a debt of gratitude, when it was only a frolic for me; but he declared at the time that if I would hunt him up a year from that date, when the period of his self-imposed vow was over, he would have something to tell me that would put me in line for making my everlasting fortune. Since then I've chased around some, and asked questions about the queer old chap, and so got in touch with what was being said about him. It concerns the pearl fisheries, as I told you aboard the brigantine, Oscar, and a bully old deposit of the beauties that Negrito knows about. Perhaps he'll condescend to tell us the whole story, which I take it must be some exciting; and it gives me a neat thrill even to picture you and myself, with old Negrito as a guide, cruising up around that region, bent on picking up this fat bag of pearls, hidden away ages ago by somebody unknown to me. But let's get a bite of supper, and then hike out to look for the copper-colored holder of the secret in his kennel."

## CHAPTER III.

## FACE TO FACE WITH DON JOSE.

JUST as Jack expected, their host seemed to have considerable of interest in their fortunes, for as they ate their supper he hovered around, seemingly only desirous of assisting his guests, but with his ear bent at all times as if hoping to pick up some scraps of their conversation that might prove valuable to that rich patron of his, Senor Jose.

The boys pretended not to notice these queer actions of the landlord, but as they devoured the homely fare with the generous appetite of youth, they

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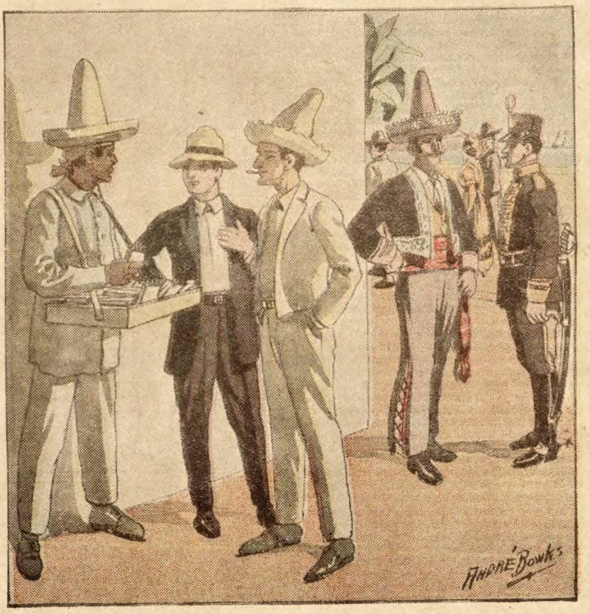
chatted about many things connected with their past travels, even to laughing uproariously at mention of Captain Jenkins, of the brigantine Casabianca, whom they toasted in barbarously made coffee, hoping he might have a successful voyage, and not grow thin worrying over the two slaves who had escaped his fond care.

Pedro shook his grizzled head in despair several times, as he failed to catch the faintest spark of valuable information that would fire his carefully arranged magazine. Still, he had a dogged look about the eyes, and it was evident that his faith had lost none of its edge.

Several times Jack mentioned the name of Negrito, just to queer the "old duck," as he mentally termed Pedro; and on such occasions it was worth while to watch the flash of anxiety that shot athwart the swarthy face of the landlord, only to turn into a look of bitter disappointment when Jack simply described the strange old chief to his friend, as if satisfying his natural curiosity.

They affected a carelessness that would have deceived most persons, as after the meal they prepared to saunter forth to look the Indian up. Oscar had his everlasting pipe going, and looked about as contented an individual as could be found in Mazatlan.



*"I want to know who that fine caballero is."*

"Well, hold cock," said the Conch, in a subdued tone, as they strode away down the street, already beginning to show signs of life after the heat of the day had begun to decline, and the evening breeze had sprung into existence, "the bally cove looked as hif 'e could heat 'is 'at with disappointment, didn't 'e? Hit's a jolly lot these Mexicans hare, has a 'ole. Hi hexpect hour friend Pedro must 'ave been something hof a smuggler or helse a guerrilleros chief hin 'is younger days, 'e's so rummy looking. Bloom hit hall, hif Hi don't think there's some kind hof a dago pattering halong hafter us, me boy."

"I expected that. Pedro has some particular idea about what our reasons for wanting to meet the old chief may be, and he's bent on finding out. Of course, we could lose the fox, but that would look as if we had something to conceal. Better play an open game, and trust to what Negrito says when he hears the whole story," remarked Jack, soberly.

The boy had knocked around the world enough to know what men of evil passions would do when on the scent of a fortune; and his opinion of the beetle-browed landlord was pretty much along the same line as that expressed by Oscar when he declared the fellow had the appearance of a man who in past life must certainly have picked many a pocket, and smuggled cargoes of dutiable goods past the officials of the Government. In that case, it was evident that those with whom he played this big game for heavy stakes must be of the same strain as himself.

Jack already began to suspect that it had been a miserable trick on the part of Fate that had caused them to drift up against Pedro Agrillo, of all the tavern-keepers of Mazatlan. Perhaps, but for this keen interest in their mission, the unscrupulous chap might even have betrayed their presence in his poseda to the captain of the blunt-nosed brigantine, hoping to receive a reward for the service.

The Mexican city was now fully awake, and crowds were beginning to assemble in anticipation of the usual band concert on the plaza, the promenade, and the social time, which was looked forward to throughout the heated day.

Of course, the presence of a couple of foreign lads attracted more or less attention; but Jack, who was rapidly becoming suspicious, fancied there was even more interest taken in their movements than usual. Thus he wondered why a certain caballero, sauntering past, clad in the brave habiliments of one belonging to the upper class, should bend his head while at their elbow, and endeavor to look into their faces, as if fixing them upon his memory for some purpose.

They returned his stare boldly, though not offensively, for it would have been the height of folly to have picked a quarrel in this place, where a foreigner could lie in the Black Hole for weeks and months without a knowledge of his appalling situation being forwarded to the American consul.

"Hi wonder what that blooming beggar saw hin hus to make 'im stare like that?" said Oscar, in disgust, as the man passed on.

"Perhaps he thought he recognized us as old friends. Perhaps nothing of the sort was the reason; but a new interest, induced by certain whispers from our listening Pedro. Don't look behind, but I took a peep just now, and he's standing there as if hesitating. I wouldn't be surprised if he followed after us and took another look as he passed. Yes, he's coming. Act natural, Oscar, and talk about the people around us, how jolly they seem and all that."

The brilliantly attired hidalgo did hurry past them, and again he looked at their faces; both boys turned squarely toward him, with charming frankness, as if they had not the least thing in the world to conceal; but he said not a word, only passing on.

"Now, I'm feeling a bit of curiosity myself, and I'm going to find out who our fine friend may chance to be. He cuts such a dash that I guess he must be a well-known character on the streets. Watch my smoke, Oscar."

So saying Jack stepped up to a half-breed who was selling cigarros on the corner, and bought a pack, which he handed to his comrade. As he paid him he held up an additional coin, saying:

"Talk English—a little, eh?"

The fellow's dark face fairly shone with eagerness, as he eyed the coin and then nodded vehemently.

"Si senor—oh, much spick Engleesh. I be once tree week San Diego same. It give me much please. All right, senor," he hastened to say.

"I want to know who that fine caballero who just passed may be. See, he is stopping to talk to a tall man ahead, a man with a sword, who wears the uniform of a captain in the rurales. Do you know the senor?" asked Jack.

Again the fellow chuckled, thinking his tip as good as earned.

"Si, senor. It is Senor Jose Agramonte, one of the richest land owners in all the province," he rattled off in Spanish, forgetting that he had been spoken to in another language.

It mattered not. Oscar immediately translated what he said, and Jack stored the information away in his brain for future use.

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"Ask him if he also knows the soldier, for unless I'm much off in my reckoning it was that chap who trailed us all the way from the poseda of Pedro Agrillo," continued Jack.

The cigarro vender again grinned, and made reply.

"'E says has 'ow that would be a second dose hof hinformation, hand 'e hought to get hanother peseta for hit, the shark," announced the Conch. disgustedly.

"Tell him he shall have it. The information will be worth ten times the money to us, Oscar. Fire away, old chap," laughed Jack, producing another silver bit, upon which the eyes of the muchacho lighted eagerly.

A few sentences were hurriedly exchanged between the West India native and the half-breed boy.

Oscar's face showed that he had heard something that gave him a twist.

"'Ere's a screamer, hold cock," he remarked immediately. "What d'ye think the blooming cove says—that the chappie hin the huniform talking with hour friend the toff his a Captain Manuel Agrillo, son hof hold Pedro."

"Just what I suspected. That shows how the wind lies. We have Senor Jose on our track. I reckon the gent is some interested in old Negrito and the secret he is known to carry. Oh, yes, it begins to grow light now! But until we meet the Indian and have a talk with him, we can't lay out any plans. Here, boy," turning to the eagerly waiting mestizo or half-breed, "take your pay. You have earned it all right."

To his surprise the other did not immediately turn away, but touched his arm eagerly, even as his fingers closed avariciously over the coins.

"Negrito—me know, big chief. Gringo want see him. Mira, trust Pepito, take um there 'nother peseta. Quien sabe?"

Jack looked at his chum, who nodded vehemently.

"Hi think 'e can be trusted. 'E 'as Indian blood hin 'im, hand must be hin 'ocks with Negrito. Hit's worth a try, hold chap, says Hi," he declared.

"Tell him then that we are good friends of the old chief, and have an engagement to meet him; also that Senor Jose, who is our enemy, has also a grudge up his sleeve for Negrito—we'll guess that much anyhow. Then say that we want to get in touch with the chief as soon as possible, and that more than one peseta will be his if he takes us to him in a rush."

Oscar always looked upon Jack as having a very level head on his shoulders, and was never averse to taking orders from him; so he immediately put the matter to the cigarro vender, who at once nodded, frowned in the direction of the two talking men and beckoned our friends to follow.

He instantly slipped into a dark opening between two of the adjoining houses.

"Follow me," said Jack. "We can trust Pepito, now that he knows we are the friends of Negrito. But it might do no harm to be ready for treachery," he added, as an afterthought.

"'Hi'm halways hon the lookhout for that when hin these beastly coast towns hof Hold Mexico. Hand Hi promise you the first chap who jumps hout hat us will get a bunch hof fives between 'is blooming hold heyes that will make 'im see stars, hand comets, too," growled Oscar, trotting along close at the heels of his companion like a faithful dog after his master.

But the mestizo was evidently only trying to throw the enemy off the scent, for after threading the passage between the buildings they came out in another calle, less pretentious than the thoroughfare recently left behind, and which ran in a tortuous way toward the outskirts of the city.

Along this they hurried, with Pepito now and then peeping over his shoulder as if to encourage their progress.

Jack cast several glances toward their rear, and was pleased to find no traces of any pursuit, so it looked as though the simple trick of the half-breed, coming so unexpectedly, had found the enemy unprepared, and they had lost the scent.

Now they were leaving behind the city walls, and around them in the twilight, which was rapidly merging into darkness, they could see hovels in front of which fires burned and human figures moved about, as though preparing the evening meal.

This highly interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during the coming months. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid ten times over.

* * *

## Dressing the Baby.

"Elijah, dear, will you dress Willie this morning? I'm in such a hurry, and it won't take you but a minute or two."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Bixby, cheerfully. "I'd just as soon dress the little chap as not. Here, my little man, come and let papa dress you. I'll have you as neat as a pin in a jiffy."

Willie, aged 4, comes reluctantly from his playthings, and Bixby begins:

"Now, let's off with your nighty gown and—keep still, dear, or I can't unbutton it. There, now, sit still, child. What makes you squirm around like an eel? Where's your little shirty? Ah, here it is and—sit still! Put up your arm—no, the other one, and—can't you keep still half a second? Put up your other arm and stop hauling and pulling so. No, let's—come here, boy. What do you mean by racing off like that with nothing on but your shirt? Now, come here and let me put the rest of your clothes on. Stand still, I say. Put your leg in here. Not that leg. There you go, squirming around like a worm. Now, if you don't keep still, young man, I'll—stop pulling at that chair, and—here, Mary Ellen, you'll have to dress this wriggling animal yourself. I couldn't do it in ten years. Go to your mother, sir!"

* * *

## Not So Rational.

An Irishman over the age of four score and ten, who by strict economy had accumulated a moderate fortune and was about to die, called in the parish priest and the family lawyer to make his last will and testament. The wife, a grasping, covetous old party, was also in the room. The preliminaries of the will having been finished, it became necessary to inquire about the debts owing to the estate.

Among these were several of importance of which the old lady had been in ignorance, but was, nevertheless, pleased to find that so much ready money would be forthcoming after the funeral.

"Now then," said the lawyer, "state explicitly the amount owed you by your friends."

"Timothy Brown," replied the old man, "owes me £50, John Casey owes me £37, and——"

"Good, good!" ejaculated the prospective widow. "Rational to the last!"

"Luke Bowen owes me £40," resumed the old man.

"Rational to the last!" put in the eager old lady again.

"To Michael Liffey I owe £200."

"Ah," exclaimed the old woman, "hear him rave!"

* * *

## A Good Housewife.

Miss Emery had given little Tim a simple problem in addition that he failed to work out. "Numbers are dry," she reasoned with herself, and determined to make the lesson more interesting.

"Suppose," she began, engagingly, "your mamma sent you to the store to buy three pounds of lamb, two pounds of potatoes, half a pound each of carrots and turnips, and one pound of tomatoes—what would you have then?"

Tim shook his head, but Marybell, only a year older, raised an eager hand.

"Well, Marybell?" said the teacher, with a sorrowful glance at little Tim.

"Stew!" said Marybell, sweetly.

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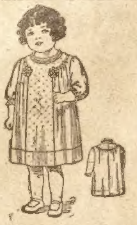
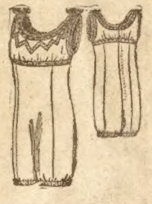
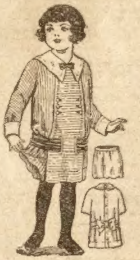


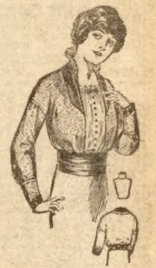
8107 Child's Dress, 1, 2 and 4 years.



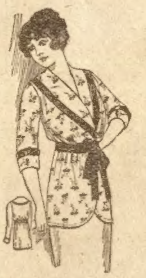
8110 Combination Under Garment, 34 to 44 bust.



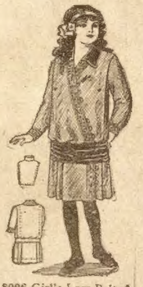
8117 Child's Dress, 4 to 8 years.



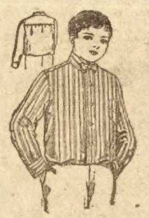
8091 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 42 bust.



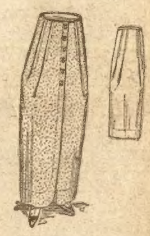
8103 Dressing Jacket, 34 to 44 bust.



8096 Girl's Low Belted Dress, 8 to 14 years.



8111 Boy's Shirt, 6 to 12 years.



8106 Peg Top Skirt, for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.

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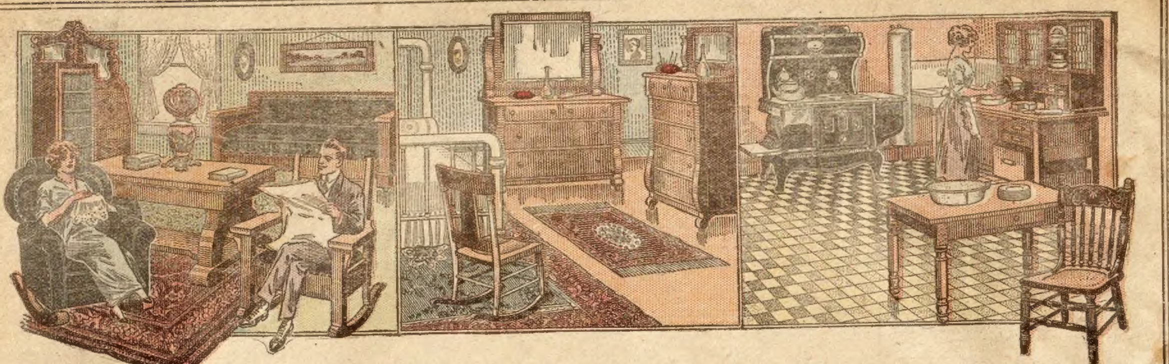

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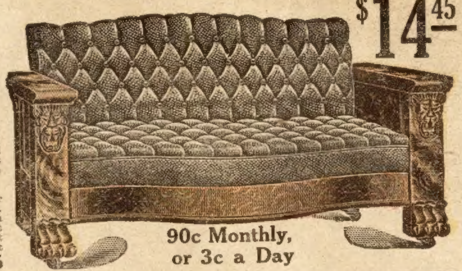

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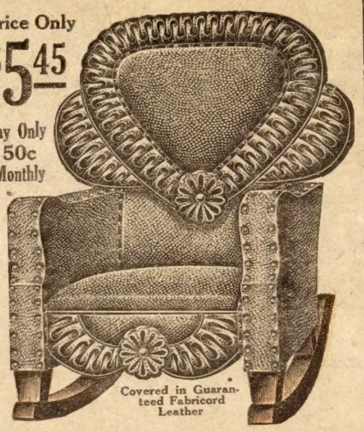

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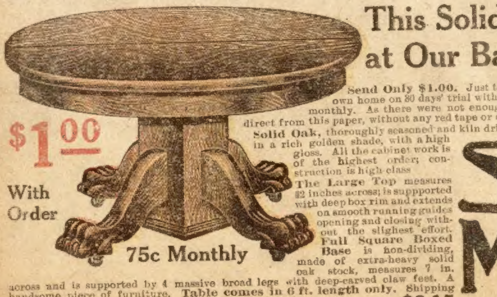

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